The Craft of Poetry

Clement Wood

CLEMENT WOOD has also written

POETS OF AMERICA

"'Poets of America' is likely to provoke controversy. Such a wide survey of such a fairly new field could hardly be otherwise. . . . It is superior to any text now published—one more volume to be included among the viable texts that record life and letters as a living thing. . . . It is a companion volume in its field to the persuasive charm of Wilbur Cross's 'Development of the English Novel' and Frances Newman's keen study of 'The Short Story's Mutations.'"

Edwin Clark in *The New York Times.*

"A book of intelligent criticism of the leading figures and main currents of American poetry from colonial days down to the present."

The American Mercury.

"The essays have literary as well as critical value. I do not know of any more competent critic of present-day poetry, or any who commands a more crisp and sparkling style."

The Christian Century.

"He leaves the beaten path not only in style of description but in the choice of poets whose work is described."

The Saturday Review of Literature.

"His book is full of vigorous criticism."

Harry Hansen in *Harper's Magazine.*

"He writes with fervor and color, which are praiseworthy qualities in any critic. Also he tosses out of the window the conventional valuation of American poets. . . ."

Herschell Brickell in *The New York Evening Post.*

"Readers of this book will wish that they had read one-tenth as widely in American literature as has the author. His breadth in American poetry is amazing. . . . The book is a credit to himself, to American literature, and to his publisher."

The New Leader.

Published by E. P. Dutton & Company, Inc.

THE CRAFT OF POETRY

THE CRAFT OF POETRY

By

CLEMENT WOOD

AUTHOR OF "POETS OF AMERICA"

NEW YORK

E. P. DUTTON & COMPANY, Inc.

THE CRAFT OF POETRY, COPYRIGHT, 1929
BY E. P. DUTTON & COMPANY, INC. :: ALL
RIGHTS RESERVED :: PRINTED IN U. S. A.

First Printing . . . . Jan., 1929
Second Printing . . . Jan., 1929

CONTENTS

PAGE

FOREWORD ix

BOOK I

POETRY IN HUMAN LIFE 3

BOOK II

THE TECHNIQUE OF VERSIFICATION 41

BOOK III

THE KINDS OF POETRY 165

BOOK IV

FORMAL, LIGHT, AND HUMOROUS VERSE . . . 229

BOOK V

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS 347

FOREWORD

THIS study of the technique of versification in English is intended primarily for those who aspire toward expression in poetry or light verse; secondarily, for classes in prosody, whose main purpose is oftener to undergo a chore than to roar a carol; and, thirdly, for the interested general reader, as somewhat of a key to that strange and yet still human species, the poet. Andrew Lang sings charmingly of Primitive Man,

> When he spoke it was never in prose,
> But he sang in a strain that would scan.

This primitive man was your ancestor, as well as mine; he forefathered your iceman and the traffic cop on the corner, as well as William Shakespeare and Henry Ford. The ambition to write poetry is as universal a childhood complaint as the mumps or Liberty Measles; and, in many cases, it is incurable. It was incurable in Shakespeare's case, and the world is the richer by many lines admirably quotable, and by countless volumes seeking to establish that Shakespeare must have been two other fellows. Medical science has improved, and apparently Mr. Ford has been cured. At least, the popular impression is that he had rather make a billion than a sonnet, any day. A poet is different: he would

much prefer to make both. Since, in the practice of poetry, that is distinctly impossible, he achieves the sonnet, deposits it in his pile of manuscripts, and, toward the end, becomes interested in the entrance examinations of homes for the aged and indigent. Yet he has had, quite often, a splendid time writing his sonnet, and seeing how much punishment his friends can stand, in listening to it and its brothers. It is for all such incurables that this volume has been written; and for all the scientifically curious who seek to comprehend what these poet fellows are like, anyhow.

There are volumes on the market designed to cover the same field. But this differs from them, in that it comes out of the fire of the work-shop. My grandfather, whom I idolized, had published his volume of verse in the seventies of the last century; and, as a by-product of this, the family still treasures letters of discreet commendation from Longfellow and Lowell, and a frugal postal card from Whittier. My aunt repeated, three decades later; and I grew up serfed to the trade. Not apprenticed, more is the pity: for I lacked such a volume as this, and—in magnificently medieval Alabama—any contact with practitioners in poetry, except Orion T. Dozier and Joseph Jarvis Cook Due, two village Miltons whom I hope yet to appreciate properly in print. But serfed I was, and so serfed, as chief police magistrate of Birmingham, I whiled away the time while witnesses were testifying perjuriously by writing verses, which I slid into the judicial drawer while pronouncing sentence. So serfed I came to New York, and here I found poetry—this was in the mad days of 1913, when the poetic boom waxed

mighty over the land—liver than a charged wire; and I soon learned how little I knew—a mood that has, I am glad to say, grown upon me. My volumes of verse began to appear, in despite of the few waspish critics and the more deadening fanfare of sluggish appreciation which every book receives. By this and that string I was pulled into the field of criticizing verse, in class work, with individuals, and by correspondence; so that I should feel a responsibility for some hundreds of young versifiers who are even now meeting, in presenting their product to the public, the experiences, not to be talked of, which I encountered before them, and which all poets before have encountered. This study is the result of a decade and a half of practical criticism of verse; and, whatever its faults, it is alive in a sense that a study by a professor of classic poetics can not be.

It has a theme, this volume—every book must have; and in this instance, as often, the theme made itself as the book was written. For not until I began to assemble the practice of all the living poets did the weight of this theme manifest itself; and it has not, as yet, found utterance in any study of poetics. And that theme is the amazing extent to which the poets of the last thirty years have broadened the technique of poetry. The poet who writes today in the atmosphere of Tennyson and Browning, the light versifier who still moves in the air of those frigid masters, Pope and Praed, is inevitably writing a product that is extinct before he writes his next line. Poetic rhythms have altered as the map of Europe has altered: this is as true

of formal metric verse as of free or polyrhythmic verse. Poetic rhymes have altered like the dog that passed through the sausage machine: consonance, "off rhymes," "sour rhymes," are as epidemic as violations of the Volstead Act. Poetic vocabularies have altered, from a caponic gentility to a living speech. Most would-be poets, most classes in prosody, do not suspect this; and, unless they are deflected in time from rootedness under the shadow of Keats and Milton, they are doomed to unspeakable onslaughts from the few intelligent critics of poetry, and to an unreceptive popular inertia that withers the soul—all avoidable, if they can sense, in time, what all of the leading living practitioners of poetry, in England and America, have accepted as platitudes of their altering craft.

Every living art has gone through the same inner bath of fire that poetry has experienced, and each has come out bettered. A few years back, and we were chuckling at the "Nude Descending a Staircase" and its eccentric relatives in painting. Today, the same spirit has stabilized itself into a new art of interior decorating, which furthermore possesses the whole field of advertising art, including every important window-display in metropolitan stores throughout the whole Occidental world. The eccentrics, always super-sensitives, feel the new spirit first; then, in the end, their aberrant experiments become, in the hands of more well-balanced artists, the technique of a generation or longer, and permanently enrich the art thereafter. Poetry has, unknown often to the very enrichers, gone through this period: and out of the hour of pattern-breaking has come

a newer, subtler, deeper music, swinging back toward the almost forgotten dawn-song of primitive man. It is as a synthesis both of the poetic practices of the past, and of this new spirit, that this study may be of value.

CLEMENT WOOD.

New York City.

BOOK I POETRY IN HUMAN LIFE

THE CRAFT OF POETRY

BOOK I POETRY IN HUMAN LIFE

I Poetry

Poetry Defined.—Man, with a fantastic casualness, has an ineradicable tendency to turn his words into jacks-of-all-trades. The sharp outlines of the original definitions are nibbled away, the meaning is constricted, bloated, altered in strange unbelievable directions. The Latin *cohors,* inclosure or poultry-yard, veers into *court, courtesy,* with their dignified modern meanings; the Old English *mearh scealc,* horse-servant, is hardly recognizable in the impressive *marshal; prude* has small trace of its near kinship to *proud* and *prowess; naughty,* which meant utterly wicked in Elizabeth's hour, today has shrunk to denote a child's slim breaches of the required decorums. So the word *poetry* has become at least a Siamese triplets of meanings; and we must discipline it back to intellectual simplicity and clarity, before we can treat properly of its form and substance.

In its widest sense, the word is loosely broadened to signify whatever embodies the products of imagination and

fancy, the finer emotions and the sense of ideal beauty. In this usage, we speak of the "poetry of motion," the poetry of Rodin, the poetry of cabbage-raising. We must apply a potent astringent before we have arrived at the subject-matter of this study. In a sense narrower, and yet still too vaguely ample, the word does duty to describe any writing or utterance in words which evokes the emotional response found in great poetry, in the strictest sense. In this light we speak of the poetry of Lincoln's *Gettysburg Address,* or Ruskin's prose. This is well enough, if it be understood that strict language has been replaced by a lax vocabulary. In accurate usage, poetry is the name of one of the fine arts, a literary art using words as its materials, which includes within its boundaries the bulk of the products of the men and women classed by successive generations of critics as poets.

So far, poetry has been merely described in a roundabout fashion as the product of the poets: and a word can not be defined by itself. Most definitions of poetry are sadly wanting in intellectual clarity. The dictionary defines it, on the technical side, as requiring (1) "musical and moving words," or (2) "usually though not necessarily arranged in the form of measured verse or numbers." The first description is inadequate. All words are musical: the staccato *Connecticut* no less than the mellow *magnolia,* the crisp *"Halt!"* as surely as the languorous *Elysian.* Any word, used in its moment, may be infinitely moving; and equally it may be crassly trivial. The northern ear is accustomed to explosive speech in crisp air, and the southern

to a drowsy drawl: their standards may differ, and yet poetry may definitely dwell in either. If musical groups of words are intended, the same criticism applies. The finest prose has a music no less stirring than great poetry: "This is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased" has not failed to make greater the hearts of believing generations. So much for the first offered description. The second, containing the vacillating "usually," of course fails, since the use of the adverb permitting exceptions rules it out as a definition. The dictionary, then, leaves us in the air, with no more support than the melted wings of Icarus.

Macaulay, in his essay on Milton, gets no closer to the marrow than to state that poetry does in words "what the painter does by means of colours." This is equally true of much prose. Matthew Arnold grants to poetry—

> the power of so dealing with things as to awaken in us a wonderfully full, new, and intimate sense of them, and of our relations to them.

Good prose does as much. Fabre's *The Life of the Spider,* Thomas Beer's *Stephen Crane,* Edith Wharton's *Ethan Frome,* are not poetry, and yet they precisely satisfy Arnold's dictum. Samuel Johnson is no nearer:

> The essence of poetry is invention: such invention as, by producing something unexpected, surprises and delights.

Many a good detective or adventure story does as much. Coleridge is further astray, when he writes:

> Poetry is not the proper antithesis to prose, but to science. Poetry

is opposed to science, and prose to metre. . . . The proper and immediate object of science is the acquirement or communication of truth; the proper immediate object of poetry is the communication of immediate pleasure.

Coleridge, in thus using *antithesis,* makes the errant implication that truth and pleasure are antithetical, opposite, mutually exclusive: that the "acquirement or communication of truth" excludes pleasure, which is directly contrary to what psychology has established. There is definite pleasure in the acquirement of truth, and in the communication of it. Science is ordered knowledge and hypotheses: its opposite is disordered knowledge and hypotheses, or statements contrary to knowledge. Prose rhythm, not prose, is opposed to poetic rhythm, a far wider thing than metre; poetry is opposed to prose, only in the sense that day is opposed to night. Opposition is not the right word here, if we are logical: day and night are complements describing durations normally with and without sunlight; prose and poetry are complements decribing verbal expression with and without a definite rhythmic tendency toward regularity, as we shall see. Even this differentiation is not yet at all clarified.

The *Britannica* article includes in its definition "rhythmical in movement": this, and the other elements it offers, are as true of prose as of poetry.

Ruskin makes a better start than any of these. To paraphrase his definition, poetry is the expression in musical words of thoughts which appeal to the higher and nobler

emotions, or their opposites. We have already indicated that "musical words" is too vague. The "appeal to the higher and nobler emotions, or their opposites" excludes mere verse, such as much of Mother Goose and an infinitude of platitudinous and inept rhymes. The expression "musical words" must be replaced by more accurate phrasing, giving the technical difference between prose and poetry—defining the way that poetic rhythm differs from prose rhythm. For technically we can pass judgment upon prose and poetry as accurately as an astronomer weighing stardust or a grocer weighing sugar; with the final reservation that the actual dividing line between prose and poetry is for each critic, which means each reader or listener, to arrive at for himself. In the broadest sense of world poetry, which includes the products of the Oriental poets as well as the Occidental, this technical differentiation may only be described as "expressed in words arranged according to some accepted convention." Thus to the Japanese, as their tanka and hokku evidence, the convention is merely an unalterable number of syllables to each line. In a sense broad enough to include all of the world's poetry, we would then define:

Poetry is the expression of thoughts which awake the higher and nobler emotions or their opposites, in words arranged according to some accepted convention.

In Occidental poetry, streaming out of the Greek and Roman classics into the multiform splendor of European and American poetry, the point of differentiation between

poetry and prose, technically, is this: the rhythm of prose tends toward variety; that of poetry, toward uniformity or regularity. We would then define:

Poetry, in the Occidental sense, is the expression of thoughts which awake the higher and nobler emotions or their opposites, in words whose rhythm tends toward uniformity or regularity, rather than toward variety.

As to content, the test is subjective: does the alleged poem awake in you the noble emotions, or their opposites? Whatever your answer is, it determines whether the particular passage is poetry or mere verse, to you. You may find all poetry in *Paradise Regained,* or in Col. D. Streamer's memorable quatrain,

> In the drinking-well
> (Which the plumber built her)
> Aunt Eliza fell.
> We must buy a filter.

The consensus of opinions, over a long stretch of time, establishes those whom the race regards as poets. As for technique, in the world of Western poetry, the matter may be tested by scansion, with the final differentiating point or zone between prose and poetic rhythms determined by each critic, reader, or listener. To me, Whitman's *Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking* is indubitably poetry; to me, most of Whitman is technically verse, although some of it sags far below the test of poetic content. To you, *The Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard* may mark the rhythmical limit of poetry: in which case, you will exclude

most of Shakespeare, and a wealth of other material generally accepted as poetic. There is less a dividing point than a twilight zone, in which the product may be regarded either as prose rhythm or poetic rhythm, and may, even with the same individual, alter in his judgment from hour to hour. Definition can only be from the center, not from the circumference: noon is day, midnight is night, and twilight is both, either, or neither, as you choose to regard it. The rhythm of the typical newspaper story is prose rhythm; the rhythm of *Take, O Take Those Lips Away* is indubitably poetic. Between these two you must place your own stakes, both as to rhythm and as to the emotional effect of the content of the product.

Its Rôle in Human Affairs.—Poetry preceded prose, as a persisting literary form of expression. Primitive man at first lacked the art of perpetuating his uttered words in writing; and poetry was far better adapted to be retained in the mind than its more plodding relative, prose. It possessed numerous mnemonic devices, or artificial aids to the memory, which prose lacked. The impressive beat of its rhythm, the formal arrangement into lines of definite length, and such later developments as alliteration, assonance, rhyme, and a repeated refrain—all of these in turn, singly or together, eased the mind's task of memory. Moreover, poetry was comparatively concentrated, as contrasted with the comparative dilution of prose. So it was that the savage mind rejected prose, or rearranged it into the form of verse. It was, in the beginning, the all of literary expression. Lyric cries, folk wisdom, memorable tales of

tribal heroes, formal odes of jubilation or lamentation, religious teachings, philosophies and pseudo-sciences, whole histories of men, men-gods, and gods, developed at first in the form of poetry.

But, after all, all of man's artistic forms of expression tend to become sacred as forms, rather than as expressions: and in poetry, as in all the other arts, the form began to rigidify and petrify, constantly in the direction of artificiality and remoteness from real life. It is easier to remember a line of iambics than a line of prose; but the prose is a natural expression, and the iambics almost invariably an unnatural expression. Man learned to write, and thus to preserve, in the longer memory of papyrus, sheepskin, or stone, what was worth retaining. At first it was the poetry and the verse that was written down; and, in this verse, the kings and men of ancient time spoke in formal artificiality, rather than in a living speech. Sooner or later, this art pattern was broken, as all art patterns must be, by the innovation of writing down matters in the humbler and more human prose. At first this must have been confined to contemporary matters; but soon enough the method of prose was applied to the chronicles of the past, and the age of prose had begun.

One by one the domains of poetry have been overrun by the more mundane hordes of prose, until only a small terrain still remains indisputably the realm of poetry. The vast territory of history, religious teachings and comments upon them, philosophies and disputations concerning them, critical works, psuedo-science and at length science itself,

lowered their flags to the onslaught of prose. The continent of fiction yielded almost wholly; the urban dweller in an urbanized world reads his short stories, novelettes, and novels, with never a thought to ballads, tales in verse, singing romances, and epics; only the backwaters of civilization, such as remote mountain settlements and metropolitan poetry societies, still accept a versified story. The vast field of the drama surrendered only recently: a master as recent as Ibsen began as a poet, before he ended as a prose realist. One by one the domains have been overrun, until only a small terrain still remains. But that is by no means an unimportant spot, that retained acropolis that has survived a lost empire: for it is the small space known as a man's heart. There is no need today for unimpassioned song; but the high cry of man's emotions still naturally clothes itself in poetry.

Poetry today, wedded to music, still survives in the song set to music. It is still alive in the lyric as yet unwedded to a tune. It still has a whimsical rôle in light verse, even including advertising verse. It has a faint vestigial life in belated examples of earlier forms, such as narratives and dramas. And yet, limited as is its modern compass, there is a strange compensation. For, since poetry is in its essence concentration, it is treasured as an attar of desire. The prose of any period is outmoded in less than a hundred years, and must be rephrased repeatedly for the succeeding generations. We may still call *Tom Jones* and *Clarissa Harlowe,* if we are pedants, the greatest novels in the language; but we do not read them: we turn in-

stead to fresher stories, told in our own living language. This is not true of the poets of yesterday: there is no need for any rephrasing of Tennyson, Browning, Whitman, Poe, Shelley, Keats, Coleridge, Shakespeare, Campion, or even of Chaucer, if his dawn-English is slightly modernized. The word of the poet persists, where the word of the prose-writer of his day becomes a museum piece. More than this, the very personalities of the poets are dear to men, as prose-writers are not. We are all interested in the very lives of Villon, Marlowe, Byron, Swinburne, Sidney Lanier, and quite cool toward the chronicles of Geoffrey of Monmouth, Browne, Macaulay, Gibbons, and Bancroft, to list typical contemporaries of the listed singers. More than one cause is at work here. The lives of poets are notably eccentric and centrifugal; this lends interest to them, especially since our own desires are fugitive rebels from the herd's ways. They broke man's laws and Yahweh's tablets, these singers; and in their indecorums our sobered and regimented souls can find vicarious adventuring. A sort of atavism plays its part too, perhaps; for poetry was at first the all of retained literary expression, and much of our glance is permanently fixed upon a never-existing golden past. We all want to be poets, since the poet was once the military chieftain, the kingly conqueror. There are few of the sons of men who have not buried a young desire to shine in poetry; a far smaller number hunger and thirst after fame as historians or philosophers in prose. There is high compensation in the starveling rôle of a son of song today: for the rôle brings treasures of the spirit, and a

balm that is an anodyne to the crunching of the wheel of gross material existence.

II The Poet

His Altering Status.—Along with this change in the social significance of poetry, which has narrowed its field so enormously, has gone a concomitant change in the rôle played by the poet in the social life, and even in the very types of persons who produce the poetry. In the beginning, the poet bulked large in the tribe: he was the historian, the prophet, the priest, and the custodian of the tribal traditions, perpetuated in the form of song. Great-throated warriors and hot-eyed kings were proud to be noted as poets: we have the psalms of David, the love-song attributed to Solomon. Even as late as the middle ages royalty and nobility were often numbered among the poets, although a wide new class came in—the professional singers, such as the troubadours, who lived upon the largess of the nobles, and reflected in their song the source of their support.

There came a slim hour, as Macaulay points out, when the great ceased to support literary men, who ultimately came to be supported by the many, the people as a whole. This many, this book-buying public to whom the author looks for support, increases constantly in a democracy: and, for better or worse, the world is becoming a sort of democracy. As the numbers of the people who participate in this support increase, their standard of culture lowers: until it is impossible to exaggerate today the low standard

of popular culture. People whose mental pabulum consists of tabloid picture-papers, canned cheap popular songs, and ninth-hand opinions derived from tabloid editorials, can hardly be expected to care for Keats and Shelley: nor do they. An occasional dose of Walt Mason or some cheerful inspirationless Rhyme-a-day is all the poetry they care for; and the poet finds himself unsupported, financially, by any one. There is no market for his poetry—no slightest chance, that is, of securing a living in return for his song. There is still pay for ditch-digging and general housework

There has also been a change in the types of persons who produce the poetry. Once it was the expression of a whole people; and the people's leading personalities contributed to it. But today the assured, or at least the highly probable, high returns, financially, come from some industrial occupation; the great adventures lie there, and the wide hearted spirits that once turned to poetry and kindred artistic fields now go into a stocks and bonds office, or some similar trade. The sensitive neurotic still turns to poetry or some similar art field; for here alone can he find release from inner irks. There is also a demand, far better paid, for song-writers; and their material reward increases in proportion to the cheapness of their product. There is, lastly, a field for writers of light and humorous verse, not illy paid in some instances. The soul-sick, the purveyors of tin-can alley popular songs, the professional jesters—these three still have a place in the living poetic stream.

And yet, there is still the almost universal desire to write poetry, and to shine in the field. . . .

The Poet's Equipment.—The situation is perhaps not quite as dark as has been indicated. For there are many men and women who can afford to acquire and practice proficiency in verse-making or poetry, without needing to expect financial return from the activity. To those thus incomed against life's bill-collectors, as well as to those willing to stand the gaff, due to an inner unbreakable attachment to the craft or trade of verse-making and poetry, a preliminary study of the poet's needed equipment will be of value.

The goal that each aspirant seeks is, naturally, poetic greatness. It is to be doubted if any one has embarked upon the field with an aspiration no higher than to become a mediocre poet, a tolerable versifier. Poetic greatness is awarded only to a limited number, in the last analysis; and soon enough the aspirant may find that he or she is falling far below the expected guerdon. But there is always the future, the possibility of growth; and certain qualities, while they will in no case produce the acclaim of poetic greatness, are nevertheless prerequisites to the possibility of reaching the goal.

The first of these is sincerity. If poetry is the concentrated expression of the heart's desires, you may be sure that sham and artificiality will be soon detected and flouted for the worthless thing it is. It is easy to slip into the ruts of commonplace attitudes, and write verses extolling the radio, or Lindbergh's flight, or the old church spire, or the little red schoolhouse; but, unless your own personality is wrapped up in your subject, your effort is wasted. Insin-

cerity always advertises itself in a thousand subtle ways; like murder, it will out, and like murder it receives a devastating punishment. You may secure a brief acclaim from some of the uncritical, but you are out of the line of the accepted poets already. For they display, one and all, a terrible sincerity.

Kipling could not have become the uncrowned laureate of the British Empire, if he had not believed in every province of his soul that it was of utmost importance. Robinson could not have become the accepted voice of human failure, if he had not held to a belief in it in his heart's core. Francis Thompson is the spokesman of Catholicism because he throbs with blinding faith in it; and Keats is a tongue for undefined beauty, because to him it was the acme of things to be. No one of these could change his rôle with any of the others: we can not conceive Robinson oding the British Empire, nor Kipling hymning Catholicism, nor Thompson etching failure in golden song, nor Keats lauding any of the three. Each was sincere: and each poet must be. If you seek to sing any of these, failure, or beauty, or what not, because others have sung them, you are foredoomed to failure. You must sing what is the finally vital thing to yourself, in sincere simplicity of soul.

Another essential is technical mastery—adeptness in the craft of poetry, skill in handling all of the tools of the trade. This entails some labor; but it is, in essence, no difficult task. The reason for this requirement is simple. The tools of the craft of poetry are merely ways of making easier your task of expressing your own word. They

have been arrived at by a process of trial and error. The mistakes of the past are written large over the history of poetry. In general, each poet has progressed enormously, from the juvenile beginnings to the flower of his maturity. Take such a simple example as the poetic vocabulary. One modern American poet, in her first volume, used such outworn and archaic expressions as *straight I went, mortal harms, Lethean dreams, I have been dedicate, stood at stare, adrift, 'twas, 'twixt, bestud, poesy, impearled, shotted,* and half a hundred more; and soon enough the poet learned that poetry, to be living, must speak the living language of its own day; and thereafter such words and phrases were rigorously excluded from her vastly more effective work.

The history of drama has established that drama in verse is not welcomed today by managers or by the public; the aspirant who seeks success in poetry will learn this, and not waste vast energy in making the errors that poets of the past have made in this field. There are certain pairs of rhyming words which have been so over-used that they have ceased to wake any emotion save disgust, if used without some startling freshness. Among these are *love, dove; kiss, bliss; trees, breeze; shining, silver lining; dreaming, gleaming*—a hundred others might be given. It is well to learn this in advance, and avoid the necessary dispraise that a marked use of these old devices would bring. There are things to avoid at every step of the way; the duty of the embryonic poet is to learn these, and start without the handicap of ignorance of the craft. An ignorance of just such fundamentals has condemned hundreds of versifiers

to be adjudged hopelessly mediocre; time applied in advance in learning what to avoid will pay large dividends in the form of public acceptation.

The fate of the person who ignores mastering the technique of the craft of poetry is simple: he becomes one of the army of village Miltons, forever silenced from any wide hearing by his ineptitude; or, worse yet, hailed, as is the "sweet singer of Michigan," as something to laugh at. The strange certitude is that the worst of these would-be poets has the same craving for poetic acceptance, and often the same themes and attitudes, as accepted poets. Yet this, without technical proficiency, benefits him not at all. My library has more than a hundred volumes by inept singers of this type; they furnish many an evening of uproarious amusement, but that is all. To earn the respect of your compeers in the craft, and of its critics, you must master its flexible technical lore.

One other matter might be mentioned here, the advantages of as wide publication as possible. No matter how well you have studied your trade, no matter how sincere your utterance may be, you must remain a biased critic of your own work. Publication exposes the fledging poem to the jeers and jibes of the callous, as well as to the praise of those who see the worth of the product. But no poet started with perfect song; and out of the very criticisms, no matter what motive may have inspired them, you can learn much that will strengthen your mastery of your medium. The modern poet must envy the opportunity of the Elizabethan dramatists to submit every line again and

again to the judgment of the groundlings; for weaknesses in phrasing, and indeed in the very building of the plot, would thus be revealed, and could be corrected in this and subsequent work. So with the publication of poetry. Every poet has learned repeatedly from the criticism of his friends as well as of his enemies. There is a pain in this, to the overly sensitive; but it must be endured, for the sake of the improved product. Indeed, often the cold light of type reveals to the poet himself flaws and weaknesses, which may at times be caught and corrected before ultimate book publication.

As to Poetic Greatness.—If a poet has mastered the technique of his craft, has profited by self-criticism and the criticism of others, and has throughout spoken in full sincerity, he has, it may fairly be said, become great in his own eyes. For greatness, in our own eyes, means merely that which phrases, sincerely and completely, our own desires. This is a subjective definition: but there is no other adequate one. We hail that as great which is the height of what we would have; and, when the would-be poet has uttered his own word fully and fairly, he has achieved this first step toward general recognition.

Beyond that, he cannot shape the matter. No man can make greatness for himself, in the eyes of the world; it must be the eyes of the world that grant the ultimate laudation. Poetry is the shaped expression of man's desires; to word it technically, in the light of the new psychology, it is a wish-fulfillment. Recognition of greatness in the poem of another, by any critic, is always tinged with an identification

of the poet's wish-fulfillment with the critic's. That poem is adjudged greatest which most adequately phrases the critic's desires, phrased either as a lyric cry or presented as a wish already achieved, as in a versified story or drama. Greatness may be redefined, from this subjective viewpoint, as the quality inhering in a work which phrases, to the largest group of people over the longest stretch of time, their individual and collective wish-fulfillments. The old definitions of greatness referred to acceptance merely; this fresher one indicates the reason for the acceptance.

It is, then, quite beside the point for the poet to crease his forehead over problems of his ultimate ranking; for that is a matter locked entirely out of his keeping. If it occur that his sincere phrasing of his own desires happens to coincide with the aims of the general, he is automatically lifted to the rôle of laureate of the general. But this is a frenzy that cannot be feigned or shammed. The poet's sincere wish-fulfillment may be apparently unique to the producer, or shared by a small group only. In such case, the poet would be great to himself, or to the small group; but he would be excluded from the general accolade forever. The love desire of Robert Burns was his own unease; but, since men and women normally thrill to the same delicious unrest, he has become one of the laureates of normal love. The beauty obsession of John Keats was a higher and more developed longing; it appeals less strongly to many, but more strongly and perdurably to the most cultured and most sensitive of men. Hence Keats is granted, by the unofficial spokesmen of man's critical judg-

ment, a high ranking, higher by far than that of Burns. Blind Milton, wedded to the cause of the commonwealth, perhaps sang of his god more as a politician than as a poet; and this may account for the sag in his poetic repute. And the poet styled Shakespeare sang, with tremendous energy, that deep desire, widespread in life, to taste life fully, to share in all men and things and adventurings; and him we call greatest of all.

Of America's dominant voices, Poe throbbed with a medley of morbid and charnel desires. His love objects were lifeless or faintly fluid with decay, or indeed alive only in memory; his spirit dwelt in the dead past, or under the wreckage of insanity. His play was the tragedy, man: its hero, the conqueror worm—so he worded it. This judgment of life, this atmosphere of brooding horror, is far more general than one might suppose: it has been wholesalely ratified in America, and enshrined in France and elsewhere. Lanier, gentle and buoyant by nature, found himself stretched on the rack of life: this he sings, looking for refuge to the glooms of the marshes, and an ultimate absorption into the shining of the sun. He grows in general repute, while the New England singers of farm and fireside wither. Walt Whitman, inept and un-self-critical yawper of sprawling polyrhythmic lines, roared lustily his delight in everything, and especially in the open road and in the Barnum myth of a Jacksonian Paradise which America was to become—a democracy with every man a hairy-chested camerado qualified to run for president or father the human future, and every woman a polythelial

Amazon, mothering her lusty dozens. We are a young people; youth is naïve; and this young vision has been taken to heart so thoroughly by America, that it largely fathered the outburst of poetry that starred the decade of the World War and the years following. All of these were sincere, and in fact or intuition apt in the craft. When America recognized in their phrased wishes its own desires, they were hailed as great. The lesson for the would-be poetic voices of the future is to sing out their sincerity, leaving such matters as general acceptance and ultimate ranking to take their inevitable course.

III The Poet's Product

How Poetry Comes.—Verse can be manufactured at any time. Its technique, as we shall learn, is comparatively simple; its adept can always turn out yards and yards of it, in any poetic feet desired. A qualified teacher of metrics can improvise a form as elaborate as a sonnet before his class, letting some member of it name for him a subject and mood desired. But this, almost invariably, remains verse; and, while every poet must sag into verse occasionally, there is small need to encourage the sagging process.

Poetry comes differently. It was the intellect that manufactured the verse; and the intellect has only a secondary rôle in the genesis of poetry. There must be, first of all, the desire that seeks its expression. This is never lacking: man is compact of desires, and the fulfillment of one or more always, hydra-like, causes still more to grow in its

place. The psychologists tell us that dreams are likewise phrasings of wishes, often suppressed, as things fulfilled; and poems are akin to dreams. There must be, secondly, some obstacle to the immediate fulfillment of the wish; otherwise, the poet would proceed to achieve the wish, and the poem would remain unwritten. As James Thomson, author of the *City of Dreadful Night,* words it, in his *Art:*

> Singing is sweet; but be sure of this,
> Lips only sing when they cannot kiss.

He continues, not quite so happily,

> Had she let his arm steal round her waist,
> Would the lovely portrait yet be traced?
>
> Since he could not embrace it flushed and warm,
> He has carved in stone the perfect form.
>
> Who gives the fine report of the feast?
> He who got none and enjoyed it least.

The first couplet, at least, is memorable, and phrases the fact endurably. There is the desire; there is the obstacle; and, out of their deadlock or stalemate, there is an inner compulsion to write. Rose O'Neill, in one of her most striking graphic productions, has drawn this compulsion as a mighty hand driven, with its imperative index finger outreached in command, sheer through the shrinking body of the poet. The poet is impaled upon the great finger-commanding hand: and so it must be, when poetry is about to be born.

This inner compulsion, this command of the unconscious, has as one of its names the word inspiration. Inspiration does not come from any outer sky; it comes from the sullen inner heavens that brood forbiddingly over the poet's own inner nature. It must speak first; there is an itch, an irk, an unease, a vague something that sends the poet scurrying for paper and pen or pencil, sensing in advance that perturbation of the spirit that promises the parturition of a poem. At the appointed time, the enceinte woman must utter her child; at the appointed time, the poet, big with an unspoken poem, must spew it forth. There is no ease, no contentment, no serenity, until it has emerged. If the forces act potently enough, the mind may not sense in the slightest what is about to be uttered. There is a sort of golden daze, a bewildered non-thinkingness: the god is speaking through the poet's lips or his writing hand, even as he once shook the silence of Delphi through lips of rigid stone. Only, it must never be forgotten that the god is an indwelling spirit.

And then the poem or poetic fragment is written, and the intellect comes into play. There has been no word of technical mastery as yet; nor does that come into the initial stage. Technical mastery becomes a thing as habitual as the components of the strange human faculty of half-falling forward which we call walking: possessing technical facility, the rhythm, the rhyme, the verse-scheme, the stanza formation, all take care of themselves. During the process of mastering technique, we have laid the inner compulsion upon our souls voluntarily to write thus-and-so,

avoiding the hackneyed and the archaic, avoiding rhythms too pat, and the like; and, when the time for actual writing comes, these things take care of themselves. We write as the thing comes: and it may be that it comes so shaped, the preliminaries referred to having been accomplished, that no word can thereafter be altered to the betterment of the poem.

This is not usually the case; and the intellect usually is called upon, for critical correction of the product. The intellect is armed with all the lore of the craft; and it whittles here and shapes there, supplements this hiatus and lops off this excrescence, until the word in its totality is as perfected as the poet can make it.

If the poem is a large and ambitious project, it may be that there will be more steps than these. We have first of all, in such cases, the first flash or conception of the poem, uttered by the compulsion of the inner thwarted desire. Then the intellect is called upon, to scheme out a framework or outline for the poem. The conscious intellect is then exiled, for the actual writing; again the inner compulsion, the inspiration, is given complete rein. Lastly, the intellect comes in for its ultimate rôle as critic. Since we are dealing with the production of poetry, rather than of verse, it may here be pointed out that the ever-present danger is of the overuse of the intellect, never of the overuse of inspiration.

An example will clear this. A distinguished American writer, at that time president of the Poetry Society of America, was invited to introduce certain poets before a

select gathering of applauders. He announced that, since the other poets were reading their poems, his introduction would consist of his most recent poem. The genesis of the poem, he explained, came to him from reading of an episode in the World War, in which a soldier of the Allies, at the very moment of plunging a bayonet into the heart of an enemy soldier, realized that the enemy was a woman dressed as a man. There is a startling emotional shock in this, combined of the ever-present element of sadism, or the desire to inflict bloody suffering, and of a gentler pity, at the tragedy of a young woman's death under such circumstances, as if under the heavy weight of unalterable fate. It is obviously a fit theme for poetry. But, the poet continued, of course, a poem could not be written realistically of the modern war; accordingly, he stated, he had placed the incident in the Peloponnesian war, during an attack by the Athenians upon the Laconian hoplites. It is unnecessary to point a moral here. The intellect had run away with the inspiration; the product, instead of being moving emotionally throughout, was as stodgy and prosy as might have been expected from a writer with such a pedantic and intellectual conception of poetry.

Take an imaginary case. Suppose that the poet, a woman, suddenly realized that some incident in the life of Cleopatra phrased, as a thing accomplished, some dominant wish of her own nature. The poet thereupon at once felt urged to write out the poem, of course using the enmummied incident, with fresh life breathed into it by the living poet, as an expression of the poet's own nature. To write

acceptably such a historical incident, it would be necessary, in greater or less degree, for the poet to saturate herself in the time of Cleopatra, and to select such episodes, characters, and background to lead up to it, as would most effectively present the modern heart of the ancient story. The intellect would come in here, after the first flash of inspiration, in order to outline the main drift of the poem —perhaps main drive is more appropriate; and then the intellect in turn would be relegated into the shadows, while the inspiration attended to the actual writing.

One more example; and this taken from the recent classics. Keats, after consideration, determined to write a poem upon the myth of Endymion, and arranged with his publisher to deliver the poem, consisting of so many thousand lines, at a time stated. Now the myth of Endymion is one of the simplest and least by-pathed in all Greek mythology. Endymion, a youth, is loved by the moon goddess; the love is mutual; and that is all. To achieve a long poem out of this, Keats had to add a deal of padding; and it is this padding to which we turn our attention. With what material would Keats supplement the simple tale? Obviously, with his own wish-fulfillments; his mind would automatically fly to these, to the things he desired most in the world, when he found a vacant space in the poem which must be filled out. Critics who lack the equipment of modern psychology are at a loss to explain Keats's ultimate product. Thus Colvin calls it an awkward phrasing of "the soul's thirst for Beauty"; and Miss Lowell describes it as an expansion of the "basic theory that love is the

principal of all things and 'creative of essential Beauty.' " But the poem itself, and especially the long stretches of padding, are something else. In it Keats takes all of the mythological stories of love rejected—the chastity myths —and overturns them completely. In his inverted dream-world Adonis yields to Venus, Arethusa to Alpheus, and Glaucus to Circe; the great mythic creations of selective and rejecting chastity all yield to love. At about the same time "Mister John Keats five feet high," as he had bitterly described himself in writing of his lack of success in love-making, was baffled and perplexed by this non-fulfillment of one of life's major desires; and so he built, in *Endymion,* a dream-world in which, by implication, the heavens gave to John Keats what all desired earthly women had refused him. Here inspiration, the speech of the indwelling god, had its own way. It is so that poetry comes.

The Inception of Individual Poems.—What particular thing will, in the end, touch off the accumulated thwarted wishes of the poet, the dammed reservoir of emotional lack, into expression as poetry, can never be predicted in advance. Sooner or later the emotional nature, dwelling upon the obstacled wish, will reach the saturation point, and the deposit of the crystals of poetry will commence; and the particular thing that impels at last to the actual composition or writing of the poem may assume almost any form. As a matter of practice, some poets compose the entire poem, if it be not too long, mentally, retaining all the lines in the memory, before any are set to paper. Others, perhaps the majority, make a point of always hav-

ing pencil and scratch paper handy; and, unless the would-be poet is equipped with a phenomenal memory, this is the safer method.

Some poems blossom out of a vague mood, a nebulous emotional state, as of bleak pessimism, or uncaused jubilation, or a foggy dissatisfaction. Others find their germinating spark in an abstract idea, as of love, or justice, or war. Poetry always gains by the use of the concrete; and such abstractions will normally be clothed, by the inspiration or the intellect, in some more definite and tangible form. The sight of a landscape may drive your pencil to paper, in a poem which in the end may have no observable contact with the countryside which awoke it. A person, familiar or unfamiliar, a chance word overheard or noted in a book, a story told by a friend or read in book or newspaper, any of these may serve as the pressure on the key that releases the poem. A rhythm may come into the mind, and plague and tease it until there is a use of it in verse. This couplet from Lindsay's *Chinese Nightingale* has a rhythm and rhyme-scheme that should be potent to waken some new chant in a new chanter:

> I stood upon the sand;
> With lifted hand I looked upon them.

An elaborate metric pattern may occur, which hangs upon the mind until it finds use in poetic utterance. Or any combination of these varied things may operate.

As a rule, it is not wise to attempt to force inspiration; to command it to produce a poem. The versifier who plans

to do a poem a day, or to follow any other schedule of production, is usually upon the wrong track; the product is likely to advertise the shallowness of poetic content. If some ambitious poem has been sketched out, the details may be allocated to a schedule, the more flexible the better. Yet exercise in verse is never harmful, if you feel in a mood for it; and often the real poem slips in under this disguise. The proper attitude is to be constantly ready for the voice of poetry to speak. If you have authentic poetry to utter, the word will come sooner or later.

Originality in Poetry.—The one quality which you, as your own chief critic, should insist upon in all of your product, is an unfailing originality. Academic teachers of poetics and versification, in school, college, and afterwards, have for years given precisely the opposite advice to poetic strivers. They have been urged to seek to write like Shakespeare, like Milton, like Tennyson; and such advice is poison. The poets have each uttered his own important word; there is no need of echo or repetition here.

The thing to keep in mind is that each of us sees the world and all within it as a novel and original thing. The experiences of childhood differ with every child born and tended through this period; the sensory impressions that come with such dazzling multiplicity, from the formative years onward, come differently to every observer. No two poets ever saw the same things, from birth on; and, even if miraculously they could have seen only the same things, there is every reason for belief that they would have seen

things widely different. Our sensory organs differ; our store of information and belief, according to which we interpret and describe to ourselves what we see, differ one from another. Let two or more observers see the same sunrise, the same vista of Vesuvius, the same field of blue bugloss briskened by a July breeze, the same building, and in every case each observer sees all differently from the others; and interprets what he has seen even more divagantly.

Each man or woman's vision, then, is unique: and it follows logically that each man's expression of his vision, in verse or poetry, should naturally differ from the word of any other person in the whole world. Now comes in the danger that we have either been mis-taught to attempt to write poetry like others; or that, being familiar with the poetry of others, and of their general acceptance as poets, we automatically decide that, if we write like them, we will be hailed, as they are, as poets. There is an even subtler danger than this; and that is the fact that familiarity with the poetry of the past labels many of the things we see with the tag phrases used by earlier singers. It may be difficult to see a crimson rose without thinking "a red, red rose"; or an aspen, without at once recollecting "its silver rainy-sounding leaves." It may be natural for the mind to leap at once to "Silent upon a peak in Darien," when we stand upon some peaked elevation; or to label a waveless sea-scene with

> As idle as a painted ship
> Upon a painted ocean.

This comes from love of the poets, and is well enough, if restricted to thought or conversation. But when we let these tags slip into our versified expression, we have taken the easiest way of utterance, have been false to our own vision, and have cheapened our product by the use of stale echoes instead of fresh speech. Take this byblow of the frigid phrasing of the age of Pope and Dryden, that zenith of euphemistic circumlocution:

> The feathered songsters gaily trill
> Within the coppice on the hill;
>
> The furry folk with joy pervade
> The bosky amaranthine shade;
>
> The finny tribe within the lake
> Gentle and purling ripples make.
>
> Shall bird and beast and fish delight,
> While I bewail my lovelorn plight?
>
> Nay, I shall hie me, heart agleam,
> Where dawn's auroral flushes stream,
>
> And quaff my moiety of joy,
> Whose rural sweetness does not cloy.

This is adequate parody, but it is far from poetry; it is an alloy of the worst phrasings of a gelid age. Nor would it be better, if the echo were of Carl Sandburg's slangier moments:

Gosh, what a racket!
Birds blah-blahing all over the landscape.
And them nutty squirrels on every branch,
Like alley-cats miaowing on the back fence.
And pipe those dinky little sardine fishes
Down in that goo.
And me here, without no Jane at all.
Well, I should worry!
I'll just give Lizzie the gas,
Find the nearest roadhouse,
And—Oh, boy! Will I soak myself
In whatever brand of embalming fluid
Them highway robbers puts in a Gordon bottle.
Lead me to it!

It is requisite, in advance, to admonish one's poetic self to avoid all echoes, and to speak freshly and with originality upon whatever may be the theme of the poem. Literary style consists of little more than one's own wording, faithful to one's own vision, of whatever is to be said. The rôle of the intellect as critic is highly needful here. From time to time echoes must creep in; and it is the task of the intellect to excise them, and to see that, in their stead, is substituted a fresh and original phrasing.

The Purpose in Your Writing.—The primary purpose of your writing of verse, it may be assumed, is not a financial one. There is no financial return, speaking in the large, from poetry. An occasional work like the *Spoon River Anthology* may sell commensurate with a best seller, due to an appeal outside of poetry; but it is well under-

stood that poetry can not be looked to for any serious contribution to the writer's income.

Most poetry is written because the writer can not avoid writing it; because the inner compulsion is so strong, that it is a sickness until it is yielded to. A writer with the poetic urge within him is not unlike the enceinte woman; and the first result of the writing is a relief from pain, rather than a definite pleasure. If this urge racks you, you will utter it, whether you are skilled in verse technique or not; and the most that a study of versification can do for you, is to safeguard you against unguessed minor ills, and to perhaps aid in steering the tendency of your product so that it will gain a more general appreciation than would otherwise be its portion. If the poetic urge does not rack, and you still desire to write verses, you will the more certainly welcome a trustworthy guide in the process. There are always definite satisfactions attendant upon the announcement that a man or woman is to be a poet, followed by the ratification of poem and volume publication: as a minimum there is more or less applause from a puzzled family and from the more overlooking of one's friends, and even an occasional fanfare of enthusiasm from some anonymous county-seat critic, furnished to the poet by a hopeful clipping bureau. And, as the versifier survives, these things multiply; and a slowly-woven circlet of laurel is reward enough for the slow travail that has produced it.

But there is one by-product of the practice of poetry that is invaluable, and that grows subtly and unnoticed until it becomes a dominant trait of the persistingly earnest as-

pirant: and this is a sense of the sanctity of the words in the language. When we have disciplined the soul to freshness and originality of poetic speech, to avoiding shopworn second-hand echoes of others like the poison that they are, we have taken a stride forward toward adequate self-expression. A man is but a half-man if he lack the power to express himself sincerely, precisely, and freshly; and that painstaking self-critical attention to the usage of words that a serious attempt at versification gives is a method of acquiring this second to none other.

The Themes and Treatments of Poetry.—The themes and treatments of poetry are limited only by the range of subjects and methods of treatment which express the human emotions. That is, for all practical purposes they are unlimited. There is no word, there is no phrase or sentence, there is no theme, there is no method of presentation, which may not be poetry in the highest. As Lowes points out, in these lines by Wordsworth—

> Why bustle thus about your door,
> What means this bustle, Betty Foy?
> Why are you in this mighty fret?
> And why on horseback have you set
> Him whom you love, your Idiot Boy?

the word "idiot" is highly unpoetic, as is the whole rest of the unnoble passage. But the fault is not in the word; for a greater once wrote,

> It is a tale
> Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
> Signifying nothing.

In *Autumn Sonnet,* by the "In American" John V. A. Weaver, the sestet proceeds:

> It is some lie that under a windswept tree,
> Touching your lips, I touched my vanished youth,
> And found again a young, new ecstasy.
> It is a lie, I say. This—this is Truth!
> Now—I shall rest. For youth and you are gone.
> Tomorrow I shall put my flannels on.

This conclusion, in the colloquial, almost in the vernacular, is magnificently poignant: it is poetry. We can only shrink aghast from what a Wordsworth or an Amy Lowell would have done with these flannels; the poetry, in either case, would have gone.

Even the ephemeral vernacular, the utterly slangy, may, in the hands of a master, in masterly treatment, become poetry of unquestioned emotional appeal. Some of the best of Sandburg is in this category. It is true that, a generation hence, such writing in slang may need a more extensive glossary than Chaucer; but the poetry is there. And this brings us to the dangers of certain themes and treatments. The use of a language not generally and widely known, and not persisting, will limit the audience of the poet in the poem in question to those who understand what he is saying. The use of themes commonly tabooed and censored will similarly limit the audience of the poet. This is no argument for avoiding such word usages and themes; it is for the poet, in each case, to determine whether he wishes to add this additional burden against wide acceptance of what he has to say.

When it was said of a man, in the days of Pericles or of Elizabeth, "He is a poet," the mental stereotype which arose at once was of a man, in every sense. For a long stretch the word *poet* depressed in its accepted meaning, until it was a term of derogation; it meant eccentric effeminate locks, and a general alteration toward effeminate imbecility. The poets of the past ten years have altered this; and again the word has dignity and commandingness. This is an added consolation to those without who seek entrance.

BOOK II THE TECHNIQUE OF VERSIFICATION

BOOK II THE TECHNIQUE OF VERSIFICATION

I Rhythm

Rhythm; and the Rhythm of Prose.—Rhythm, in oral or written speech, means the flow of accented and unaccented syllables. The critics are far from agreement upon this. The standard dictionaries usually give elaborate rambling explanations, which fail as definitions and are faulty as explanations. The word derives from the Greek stem meaning a stream, or a flowing; and the essence of its meaning is found in the same thing, in the stream or flowing of accented and unaccented syllables which constitutes speech, both in prose and poetry.

To show how far pedantic obscurantism can go, the definition of rhythm, in metrics, in one of the most widely accepted dictionaries, is "succession of times divisible into measures with theses and arses"—followed by no qualification, except the statement that theoretically all language possesses rhythm, but that the term should be restricted almost exclusively to poetry. Turn to your definitions of *thesis* and *arsis,* and you find that each means that portion of the poetic foot marked by the ictus; and, also, each portion not so marked. Turn to *ictus,* and you find that it means the metrical stress. *Metrical stress* is defined as the

relative loudness with which certain syllables or parts of syllables are pronounced; emphasis in utterance; accent. Now we have at last reached bedrock. We may throw the theses, ictuses and arses out of the window, for they furnish no aid in living versification. Rhythm, as the toilsome dictionary circumambulation among definitions at the end established, is concerned with emphasis in utterance —that is, with accent.

The critics differ. They are not poets, or even adequate versifiers, in the living tradition of poetry; they are academic parasites, a breed of lingual maggots crawling over the poetry, largely the dead poetry, of the past, seeking dumbly to understand its sealed mysteries, and reporting dogmatically their erroneous interpretations of the heart's language, dead to them, yet often living to living poetic hearts. They are worse than blind leaders of the blind; they are blind leaders who blind their followers.

For instance, the majority of the critics of metrics find rhythm concerned with time or duration of syllables, rather than with accent. Our classical education has taught us that the classic poets did so regulate their metres; let us accept this as true, even though it comes from prosodic critics of the past, whose interpretations we must distrust, due to the errant antics of their modern followers. True or not, no fact is more clearly established than that modern poetry can not be written from this standpoint, and still be acknowledged as poetry by living readers of poetry. We have had great scholars among recent poets, such as Swinburne, that master of rhythms simple and outre. Many

of these have repeatedly sought to write in the classic metres, in durational hexameters, in Sapphics and Alcaics; and failure has been their almost invariable lot. Such verses, so inspired, are deader to us than their remote dead archetypes; they do not speak to our hearts, our emotions.

The reason for this is not far to seek. The matter of duration in utterance varies with every individual; even the proportions of time allowed to accented and unaccented words vary enormously. Emphasis may be gained by quick or slow pronunciation, and especially by pause, properly used; but accent remains, in living speech, the chief tool of emphasis; and it is the thing which distinguishes rhythm in utterance.

Absolute duration is an impossible standard of differentiation. Take, in Hamlet, the soliloquies: they must be, as a rule, read slowly, deliberately, reflectively—with, of course, staccato passages interpolated, as the meaning dictates.

> To be, or not to be,—that is the question:
> Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer
> The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,
> Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,
> And by opposing end them? To die,—to sleep,—
> No more . . .

This is all slow and deliberate. But take his flashing retort to the queen:

> Seems, madame; nay, it is; I know not "seems."
> 'Tis not alone my inky cloak, good mother,

> Nor customary suits of solemn black,
> Nor windy suspiration of forced breath,
> No, nor the fruitful river in the eye,
> Nor the dejected haviour of the visage—

all forced upward, by emotional damming, into a spring freshet of pelting words.

> To die, to sleep,—
> No more . . .

The unaccented words here have a longer duration than many an accented one in the second passage. Or take many of the passages in Kubla Khan, "meandering with a mazy motion":

> But oh, that deep romantic chasm which slanted
> Down the green hill, athwart a cedarn cover!
> A savage place! as holy and enchanted
> As e'er beneath a waning moon was haunted
> By woman wailing for her demon lover—

and its slow and deliberate kindred; and contrast with these the briskness of—

> A damsel with a dulcimer
> In a vision once I saw;
> It was an Abyssinian maid,
> And on her dulcimer she played.

The most accented word in the first and other lines in this last selection goes more rapidly than the lightest word in the first and second lines of the previous quotation. Absolute duration is an impossible test. Comparative duration

is at least possible; but here too the possibility has driven the critics astray. The word *watchword* has two syllables of practically equal duration; yet the first is accented, the second not. *Windblown, upflung,* and similar compound words possess the same durational quality; the adversative *but,* through its nature, takes a longer duration than the coupler *and;* and so case after case occurs, all showing that duration as a test of rhythm is a bypath and a digression. No study of modern versification need load itself with problems of the time element in verse; the poet does not need to bother with them, except in rare cases of tonal ornamentation.

We return, then, to the rhythm of prose. Like the rhythm of poetry, it is marked by a stream of accented and unaccented syllables. The rhythm of poetry tends toward regularity; that of prose, toward constant variety. Poetry remains poetry, and prose remains prose, irrespective of that artificial convention known as line division. Read this, naturally, conversationally, simply, and yet with the dignity that the substance demands:

> When, in disgrace with fortune and men's eyes, I all alone beweep my outcast state, and trouble deaf heaven with my bootless cries, and look upon myself and curse my fate, . . . yet in these thoughts myself almost despising, haply I think on thee, and then my state, like to the lark at break of day arising from sullen earth, sings hymns at heaven's gate; for thy sweet love remembered such wealth brings that then I scorn to change my state with kings.

This, properly read, is poetry, and remains poetry, howsoever it is set up typographically. Line-division is com-

paratively a young device; the classic world for a long space lacked it entirely, but did not lack for that golden speech known as poetry. It eases the task of reading if we set this up in the conventional poetic lines:

> When, in disgrace with fortune and men's eyes,
> I all alone beweep my outcast state,
> And trouble deaf heaven with my bootless cries,
> And look upon myself and curse my fate, . . .
> Yet in these thoughts myself almost despising,
> Haply I think on thee, and then my state,
> Like to the lark at break of day arising
> From sullen earth, sings hymns at heaven's gate;
> For thy sweet love remembered such wealth brings
> That then I scorn to change my state with kings.

This, of course, is poetry; but it is not the line division that made it so. Or take this selection:

> Great and extraordinary, however, as were
> The rejoicings at this royal marriage,
> And sumptuous as were the entertainments
> Which followed Mary's elevation to her
> Royal state, she was not destined long
> To enjoy them. Perhaps, had the revelries
> Been less lasting and superb, the state
> Might have endured a little longer.

This is prose; no magic is worked by the division into lines apparently poetic. It is unnecessary to reset this in the typical lining of prose; it is too clearly not poetry or versification, to need further attention.

Let us take a briefer sentence, from a scientific work, and

see wherein the difference between prose rhythm and verse rhythm consists.

The theory of relativity has won brilliant victories, crowned by the decisive sanction of facts.

If we attempt to divide this into rhythmic feet, following the natural inflection of the voice, we would have this product:

The theory | of relativity | has won | brilliant | victories, crowned | by the decisive | sanction | of facts. |

Here we have four feet of two syllables ("has won" and "of facts" with a rising rhythm, of an unaccented syllable followed by an accented one; and "brilliant" and "sanction" with a falling rhythm, consisting of an accented syllable followed by an unaccented one); and one each of one, three, four, five, and six syllables. This is what is meant by the variety of rhythm of prose. We have no names, even in the classic prosodies, for some of these more elaborate rhythmic feet; there is no need of any names as yet.

To show how easy it is to alter the varied tangle of prose rhythm into acceptable verse rhythm, we need only to add two words after the sixth word, one after the eighth, and alter the thirteenth. We would then have:

The theory of relativity
Has won *its many* brilliant victories
When crowned by the decisive *test* of facts.

This may be scanned, or divided into rhythmic feet, in the

following regular metric pattern--a rising pattern, consisting of an invariable succession of unaccented syllables followed by accented syllables:

The the- | ory | of re- | lativ- | ity
Has won | its ma- | ny bril- | liant vic- | tories
When crowned | by the | deci- | sive test | of facts.

It is one of the blessings of poetry that its actual rhythm pattern is far more varied than metric regularity; otherwise, its sheer monotony would utterly fatigue after a few lines, as well as being, for any stretch, utterly inhuman and artificial. This is the artificial scansion of poetry. The actual rhythm that the voice would supply would not differ largely from the first, the definite prose rhythm:

The theory | of relativity
Has won | its many | brilliant | victories
When crowned | by the decisive | test | of facts.

We have here four feet of two syllables (two as before with the falling rhythm, two with the rising), two of three, and one each of one, four, five, and six syllables. The actual rhythm of the voice is still varied, if the selection is read properly. But the marked distinction between heavily stressed and comparatively unstressed syllables does not present the whole matter; there are slight secondary accents, which are utilized to make the selection fit into the metric pattern. It must be emphasized that proper reading keeps these secondary slight accents as secondary and slight

as they are in reality; so that the proper reading rhythm of this, while it belongs to a metric pattern, still has a manifold variety. That this is true of examples of poetry with this rising (or iambic) rhythm two examples will demonstrate. Take the opening of the best known soliloquy in Hamlet, as read properly:

To be | or not to be | that | is the question. |
Whether | 'tis nobler | in the mind | to suffer |
The slings | and arrows | of outrageous | fortune . . . |

Here we have four feet of two syllables (two rising and two falling); four of three syllables each (three of unaccented-accented-unaccented, and one of two unaccented followed by an accented); one of one syllable; and three of four syllables each (two of one type, one of another). In other words, in the final rhythmic analysis these three lines are each of four feet, and not of five; while the metric pattern is supposed to be of five feet rising rhythm, each four to consist of an unaccented syllable followed by an accented one. A perfect line of this type would be:

To go | to Nice | would give | a trip | divine. |

Take one of the most monotonously regular poems in existence, in this rising or iambic metre:

The curfew | tolls | the knell | of parting | day; |
The lowing | herd | winds slowly | o'er the lea.

It will be seen how far this diverges from the line last

given above. Yet it is monotonous, since it has an invariable alternation of unaccented and accented syllables, in the two lines given. This slight variety within the regularity of the pattern is what gives it life; and you will see that, the greater this variety within the regularity of pattern, the more appealingly lifelike will be the product.

One thing may need explanation, in the analysis of the soliloquy from Hamlet. In the first line, the second *be* receives no accent. This is due to a well-known law in proper reading, by which a word used for the second time, near the first usage, and without change of meaning, receives no accent. The logical purpose of accent is to emphasize the word, to call the mind's attention to it; and, once that has been done, it should not be repeated, unless there is a change of meaning.

It has become evident that prose, by some slight changes in the words used, may be made to fit into a metric pattern; that it still retains something of its varied rhythm, in spite of the underlying metric pattern; and that good poetry, with an underlying metric pattern, when properly read, has a variety that approaches prose rhythm. This should bring home how slight is the mechanical difference between prose rhythm and poetic rhythm; and yet it is an enduring reality, which marks off the one mechanically from the other. An unimpassioned man, in speech or writing, normally begins with a definite varied prose rhythm. If his emotions rise during the course of his words, his rhythm, by repetition of words and phrases and by other methods, begins to approach the regularity of poetic rhythm. All great orations indicate this, as the orator

warms to his work. He never reaches, except in flashes, the actual regularity of a metric pattern; but he is aimed in that direction. If the emotions reach a white heat, it will be difficult for him to avoid a regularity in essence metric. Thus prose and poetry are both natural forms of expression, the former comparatively unemotional, the latter highly emotional.

The end of the process is found in the utter regularity of the line quoted, "To go to Nice would give a trip divine," or in this line from Gray's elegy:

Here rests | his head | upon | the lap | of Earth

Even in this line, the foot "upon" gets only a slight accent on the second syllable, and might be joined with the succeeding foot, to read "upon the lap," with three unaccented syllables followed by an accented one; but the line is almost in the absolute pattern. A flat uniformity in any metric pattern can never be, for any length of time, the highest type of poetry. It offends by its excessive goose-stepping discipline; it is inhuman, unnatural. Great emotion does not clothe itself in perfect iambs or trochees, in any absolutely definite alternation of accented and unaccented syllables. Test any of the world's greatest poetry, and you will find an ever-present irregularity. Rhythmically the greatest poetry lies above the flat variety of unimpassioned prose, and at the same time below that shelf of safety, where the thudding tom-tom stroke of impeccable metric perfection is the invariable utterance.

Scansion and Metre.—Scansion is the division of verse into its rhythmical feet. Metre is regular rhythm in poetry.

English verse in the past confined itself primarily to four ordinary metres, or to a mixture of these. These four feet are the iamb (⏑ ′), the trochee (′ ⏑), the anapest (⏑ ⏑ ′), and the dactyl (′ ⏑ ⏑). We will take these up one by one, and consider thereafter their joint usage, their comparative interchangeability, and touch briefly on still rarer feet, which are coming increasingly into favor with modern poets.

These four feet, and others that will be mentioned, received their names and their first descriptions from classic prosodists. They were then, according to the chief authorities, based upon duration, and not on accent; the sign (′) denoted a long syllable in the Greek, and the sign (⏑) a short syllable. In English verse, the former denotes an accented syllable, the latter an unaccented one.

Iambic Verse.—The commonest foot in English verse is the iamb (⏑ ′), a foot of two syllables, the first unaccented, the second accented. The rhythm might be indicated: ta *tum*. The popularity of this foot grows out of the nature of the language. It is true that the majority of English two-syllabled words are trochees (′ ⏑), *tum* ta—for instance, *going, scansion, shaken, Thomas, watchword.* But such trochaic dissyllables in English are ordinarily introduced by an unaccented article, preposition, conjunction or the like: *the scansion, a watchword, for Thomas, and shaken;* and this gives the iambic character to our speech. In English verse, the line usually opens with an unaccented one-syllabled word, followed by a word accented on the first syllable, and this gives the iambic effect.

There are, of course, a number of words in English which are complete iambic feet, such as: *alert, alight, ashore, above, below, beneath, behind, before, complete, contend, convey, cohere, defy, delight, distend, domain, evoke, erase, fatigue, forego, giraffe, garotte, harass, herein, inspire, impose, intend, Japan, malign, maroon, obey, oblique, pretend, preclude, revoke, redeem, supreme, saloon, therein, unite, veneer, withhold.* Many of these have a prefix for the unaccented syllable, with the word-stem accented (e.g., *a-light, com-plete, e-voke, in-tend, pre-clude, re-peal, with-hold*). A number of the rest are words taken bodily from foreign languages, as *fatigue, garotte, Japan, taboo.* Iambic feet are also found in such combinations as *to go, to sea, a way, the hour, but now, and these, you know, he went.*

A one-foot line in iambics would be:

Then come.

A two-foot line would be:

Then come to me.

A three-foot line would be:

Then come to me, my love.

A four-foot line would be:

Then come again to me, my love.

Words in their nature trochaic, like *loving, darling,* fit perfectly into the iambic pattern:

Then, darling love, I listen now.

A five-foot iambic line would be:

Then come again to me, my love, and stay.

Just as surely it could be,

Then, darling Mary, listen gently now.

Four of the words in this are complete trochees in themselves; but the pattern, introduced by the unaccented *then,* is iambic.

A permissible variation in iambic verse—and, be warned in advance, almost any variation is permissible—is to end the iambic line with an unaccented syllable. An accented ending is called a *masculine* ending; an unaccented one, a *feminine ending.* The one, two, three, four and five-foot iambic lines might be:

Then welcome,
My ancient crony,
Into this singing palace,
Where none are ever wholly silent,
But days are sweet, and living is but singing.

The scansion of these iambic lines would be:

Then wélcome, |
My áncient crony, |
Into | this singing pálace,
Where none | are éver wholly silent, |
But days | are sweet, | and líving is | but singing. |

Iambic verse is found throughout the whole stretch of

English poetry, whether in Sir Walter Raleigh's bitter *The Soul's Errand:*

Go, Soul, the body's guest,
  Upon a thankless arrant;
Fear not to touch the best;
  The truth shall be thy warrant:
Go, since I needs must die,
And give the world the lie.

Say to the Court, it glows
  And shines like rotten wood;
Say to the Church, it shows
  What's good, and doth no good;
If Church and Court reply,
Then give them both the lie.

and so to the harsh end; or in such recent poetry as Grace Hazard Conkling's *Tampico:*

Oh, cut me reeds to blow upon,
  Or gather me a star,
But leave the sultry passion-flowers
  Growing as they are.

I fear their sombre yellow deeps,
  Their whirling fringe of black,
And he who gives a passion-flower
  Always asks it back.

This brief song is entirely regular throughout:

Oh, cut | me reeds | to blow | upon.

The fourth and eighth lines, it should be noted, apparently

open on a trochee; but the third and seventh conceal an extra terminal unaccented syllable, which, if transferred to the opening of the two succeeding lines, completes the iambic pattern.

Iambic verse is used in heroic blank verse (unrhymed iambic five-foot or pentameter lines), which is accepted as the noblest metre in English. This is the favorite measure employed by Shakespeare, as in the examples given, or in:

> The quality of mercy is not strained;
> It falleth as the gentle rain from Heaven
> Upon the place beneath.

This was also used in Milton's manufactured epics, largely unread now because their subject matter is not acceptable to the modern mind. The iambic foot was the one used in the exquisitely shaped couplets of the precisionists Dryden and Pope:

> A little learning is a dangerous thing;
> Drink deep, or taste not the Pierian spring.

The foot was the usual one in the folk ballads, as in:

> God prosper long our noble king,
> Our lives and safeties all;
> A woeful hunting once there did
> In Chevy Chase befall,

the opening of the ancient ballad of *Chevy Chase.* It is the foot used in the sonnet; and you may identify it in a thousand favorite poems.

Writing Iambic Verse.—As a metrical exercise, it is easy

to write endless iambics, or verses of any other foot, on any chosen theme. This is recommended only to those who feel some uncertainty in the use of the various poetic feet; or who enjoy such metrical exercises. Alternation of unaccented and accented syllables, after starting each line with an unaccented syllable—so you have the ideal iambic. It will aid you to write down your iambic pattern in the form of scansion, at first, and then to fill in your words. Suppose you decided to experiment with three iambic feet to the line—ta *tum,* ta *tum,* ta *tum,* or this pattern:

˘ ´ | ˘ ´ | ˘ ´

Choose any theme, such as *Love in the Moonlight,* and then proceed to write or improvise, somewhat after this fashion—

Whĕn ín | thĕ vá- | cănt skў |
Thĕ síl- | vĕr móon | shĭnes dówn, |
Thĕn, bў | thĕ lóved | ŏne's síde |

and so on. You can vary your pattern as you please, for instance by determining that you add a grace-note or extra unaccented syllable to the inner foot in each line, so that it follows the pattern:

˘ ´ | ˘ ˘ ´ | ˘ ´

Now your three lines might be:

When in | the bewil- | dered sky
The sil- | very moon | shines down,
Then, by | the belov- | ed's side.

Or you can plan your extra syllable to occur at any other

place in the line; and, after a little practice, you will have no trouble in composing in this or any other metre. The added grace-note in the central foot, in the example last given, made that foot an anapest (⏑ ⏑ ′); but you notice that its presence did not jar the flow of the iambic pattern, and, if anything, added to the pleasure derived from the tune.

So far, the recommendation has been to write down the improvised iambic verse, after writing down in advance the scansion scheme you intend to follow. Soon enough you can determine your scheme mentally, and proceed to write or speak the improvised verse. I have known poets who, in their adolescence, would take long walks in the deserted countryside, shouting out improvised iambics or trochaics, until the horizon reechoed their tones. I have done this myself. A slow result of this early interest in the sheer rhythmic tune of verse is that the ability to compose in any of the feet becomes habitual; and, when you begin writing an actual poem, the rhythm will take care of itself.

As a further metrical exercise, any example of writing can be turned into iambic verse, or into verse of any other foot, by substituting synonyms with different accents for any words which vary the rhythmic scheme, and by other minor alterations in the word usage. Take this opening of a distinguished American short story, *The Golden Honeymoon,* by Ring W. Lardner:

> Mother says that when I start talking I never know when to stop. But I tell her the only time I get a chance is when she ain't around, so I have to make the most of it.

This can be altered into acceptable iambic verse in many ways; for instance,

> *My* mother says that when I start *to talk,*
> I never know *the time I ought* to stop.
> But I tell her the only time I get
> A chance *to talk* is when she ain't around,
> *And* so I have to make the most of it.

It only required five changes to make iambic verse of this colloquial prose; one complete line reappears without alteration from the original.

One of the elemental things about verse is the interchangeability of the various metric feet, by slight changes. Trochaic verse, by the addition of an initial unaccented syllable to every line, becomes iambic verse. Thus this typical trochaic bit,

> Then the little Hiawatha
> Said unto the old Nokomis,
> "Is it time to loose my arrow?"

A slight change—

> The little Hiawatha said
> Unto the old Nokomis, "Is
> It time to loose my arrow yet?"

Or, if you wish iambics with an extra unaccented syllable at the end of every line (the so-called feminine ending, already referred to), we would have:

> And then the little Hiawatha
> Replied unto the old Nokomis,
> "And is it time to loose my arrow?"

Naturally, more changes are needed to alter anapestic or dactylic verse into iambics, for you have an extra unaccented syllable in every foot to get rid of; but the knack grows, until in the end a facility in handling metres is yours.

Trochaic Verse.—The trochee (´ ˘) is a foot of two syllables, the first accented, the second unaccented. It is thus the reverse of the iambic, and may be indicated: *tum* ta. The great majority of two-syllabled words in English, as we have indicated, are perfect trochees, including such word as: *atom, belted, caitiff, dogged, elfin, frightened, going, haven, inner, jaunty, kennel, laughter, mastiff, nuisance, opal, peasant, queenly, rover, stolen, timber,* and so on. Many of these consist of a word-stem followed by a suffix, as *belt-ed, go-ing, queen-ly, heath-en, death-less, Ir-ish.* Trochaic feet appear also in such combinations as *with a, for the, when the, down to, hit a, men and, go to,* and so forth.

One of the most popular school-day classics in trochaic verse is *Hiawatha,* with its monotonous—

> Should you ask me, whence these stories,
> Whence these legends and traditions,
> With the odours of the forest,
> With the dew and damp of meadows,

and on and on, to lengths rather tiresome. The witch scenes from Macbeth are predominantly in the same metre:

> Round about the cauldron go;
> In the poisoned entrails throw.

Toad, that under cold stone
Days and nights has thirty-one
Sweltered venom sleeping got,
Boil thou first i' the charmed pot.

The third and sixth lines indicate how the masters break the monotony with varied irregularities. The proper scansion of line three is,

Toad, that | under | cold | stone,

with the monosyllable *cold* pronounced so slowly that it becomes in effect a dissyllable, as *co-old;* or else followed by a pause, which takes the place of the omitted unaccented syllable. In this instance, the former pronunciation is probably preferable; in many similar modern instances, the pause is utilized. Notice that every one of these trochaic lines ends with the omission of an unaccented syllable.

You might ask, why not call this iambic verse, with the initial unaccented syllable omitted? There is small logical reason why you could not so describe it, if you preferred. But, in general, the typical opening foot of the line, if in general used consistently thereafter, controls our description of the metre; and it is customary to describe verse such as this as trochaic verse with the final unaccented syllables omitted, rather than as iambic verse lacking the opening unaccented syllable in every instance.

The sixth line should be scanned,

Boil thou | first i' the | charmed | pot.

A grace-note, an extra unaccented syllable, appears in the

second foot, making it in reality a dactyl (´ ˘ ˘). There is again no logical reason why you should not scan this

Bóil thou | first i' | the charmed | pot,

with an amphibrach (˘ ´ ˘) for the fourth foot; or thus:

Bóil thou | first i' | the charm- | ed pot,

with two trochees followed by two iambs. But the dominant pattern has been trochaics, with the final unaccented syllable omitted; and if we so interpret the fifth line, there is no reason for calling the last half of the sixth line by a different metric name.

Also, in this sixth line, the word *charm-ed* is pronounced as a dissyllable. If this were written by a modern poet, the normal interpretation would make the close of line six the same in essence as the close of line three, where *cold* is treated as a dissyllable, or an accented syllable followed by a pause. For a competent modern poet knows that, if he writes in his own living language, *charmed* is one syllable, and not two. The custom, in the time of Shakespeare, was different; the pronunciation could be *charm'd* or *charm-ed,* one or two syllables, as the scansion scheme demanded. There had been an earlier time, in the formative dawn of the language, when the terminal *-ed* was always pronounced. Attention is called to this, for the precise purpose of warning you not to have your terminal *-ed's* pronounced as separate feet, except where such is the proper modern pronunciation, as in *aged, wretched, banded, ended,* and the like.

An excellent modern lyric in trochees is Mary Carolyn Davies' *A Ballad of Mary,* with this ending:

Joseph smoothed her pillow down,
Held a cup of mead;
Joseph's ways were thoughtful ways
For a woman's need.

As upon her stable-bed
Yellow-sweet with hay,
With deep eyes that none could read,
Stilly Mary lay,

Slow she smiled and grateful wise;
Let no half-look tell
Joseph seemed a sober man
After Gabriel.

In these lines, the final unaccented syllable is omitted in every line, as in the example quoted from Macbeth. And, since Miss Davies is a modern poet, it never occurs to anyone, reading the verses, to pronounce the *seemed* as other than the monosyllable that it is in ordinary spoken English. The hang-over use of the terminal *-ed* as an unaccented syllable, among modern poets, gives an air of quaint affectation, rather than of sincerity, in the work.

Although the trochee lacks the wide popularity of the iamb, due to the natural character of English speech, it is popular for brief songs, as in this lyric of Shelley's:

Music, when soft voices die,
Vibrates in the memory—
Odours, when sweet violets sicken,
Live within the sense they quicken.

Rose leaves, when the rose is dead,
Are heaped for the beloved's bed;
And so thy thoughts, when Thou art gone,
Love itself shall slumber on.

Properly scanned, this would read:

Mŭsĭc, | whĕn sŏft | voĭcĕs | dĭe,

Vĭbrātes | ĭn thĕ | mĕmŏ- | rў—

Ŏdŏurs, | whĕn swĕet | vĭŏlĕts | sĭckĕn,

for the first three lines. The second foot is either a spondee (´ ´) consisting of two accented syllables; or an iamb (˘ ´). In the third line, the second foot again is either a spondee or an iamb; and the third has the grace-note, the added unaccented syllable, in the word *violets,* the third foot, which makes it in reality a dactyl (´ ˘ ˘), which may always be substituted for a trochee. The first two lines lack the terminal unaccented syllable to be expected in trochees; the third and fourth, with the terminal words *sicken* and *quicken,* complete the regular trochee pattern. It should be noted that the formal trochaic line always has a feminine ending; and that this, used as a dominant and not as a pleasant variation, is a trifle weak in English verse. It is not that it is difficult to find enough two-syllabled rhymes in English; but that a long succession of invariable two-syllabled rhymes gluts a trifle, in short lines especially, with a sense of over-sweetness in the

poetry. Coleridge, in one of his most inept dictums, asserted that—

> Double and trisyllable rhymes form a lower species of wit, and, attended to exclusively for their own sake, may become a source of momentary amusement.

This is nonsense; a double rhyme in its place, and even a triple rhyme, furnish a break in the monotony of constant monosyllabic rhymes, and lend both grace and strength to the poem. As a rule, they should not dominate; yet poems have been written in which a strong effect has been achieved, with double rhymes and occasionally with longer ones.

It is wiser, however, as a rule, to remember that the trochaic (and also the dactylic) pattern may with profit have a masculine rhyme ending, which means the omission of the terminal unaccented syllables.

Writing Trochaic Verse.—Metric exercises, both written and improvised orally, may be utilized in the case of trochaic verse, precisely as in the case of iambic. Iambic verse can be turned into trochaic by reversing the process previously applied, as in the case of the selection from *Hiawatha;* that is, either by omitting the initial unaccented syllables of each line, or by adding an accented syllable at the beginning of each line. Thus the opening of Portia's speech becomes trochaic when we let it read,

> Qualities of mercy are not strained;
> Falling as the gentle rain from heaven
> On the place beneath.

or by this method,

> Since the quality of mercy is not strained,
> For it falleth as the gentle rain from heaven
> Ever on the place beneath.

Here is the way the opening of the Ring Lardner short story could be transmogrified into trochaic verse:

> Mother says that when I start *my* talking
> I *can* never know when *I should* stop.
> But I tell her *that* the only time
> I *can* get a chance is when she's *gone,*
> So I have to make the most of it.

Here we have made six unimportant changes in the prose, and have altered vernacular prose into acceptable trochaics. The whole fifth line reappears without any alteration. All you need, for trochaic lines of this five-foot pattern, is the mental tune: *Tum* ta, *tum* ta, *tum* ta, *tum* ta, *tum* ta, with the *tum's* accented, for trochaic verse; or the reverse, Ta *tum,* ta *tum,* ta *tum,* ta *tum,* ta *tum,* with the *tum's* still accented, for iambic five-foot verse. Then, by substituting for these sound symbols words with the appropriate accents, you have your trochaic or iambic verse written.

Such exercises are not supposed to produce poetry, it must be constantly remembered; nor even to improve verses already written. Their function is to familiarize the student of poetics with the ordinary metres, against the time when actual poetry stirs within him.

If you wanted to write on *Love in the Moonlight* in

trochees, you would write down or compose mentally your scansion scheme,

/ ⏑ | / ⏑ | / ⏑

and then proceed to improvise:

In the | vacant | heavens
Silvered | by the | moonlight,
By the | loved one's | murmur

and so on. It will be unnecessary to devote separate space to exercises in writing anapests, dactyls, amphibrachs, and the other English feet; similar methods will apply in every case.

Anapestic Verse.—The anapest (⏑ ⏑ /) is a foot of three syllables, the first two unaccented, the last accented. It can be described as an iamb with an extra initial unaccented syllable; it may be indicated: ta ta *tum*. Examples of anapestic three-syllabled words are *introduce, insecure, appertain, interfere, supersede, uncontrolled, undefined.* These are often formed by unaccented prefixes of two syllables added to accented word stem of one syllable. Anapestic feet are also found in such ordinary combinations as: *to the end, with a blow, an alert, for a joke, to the Nile, in Japan.* Swinburne's *Hertha* is largely in anapests:

I am that | which began;
Out of me | the years roll;
Out of me | God and man;
I am e- | qual and whole.

In the third line, the foot *God and man* is really an unusual foot called the amphimacer (/ ⏑ /), consisting of

accented, unaccented, accented; but it fits without strain into the anapestic pattern. Byron's *The Destruction of Sennacherib* is in vigorous anapests:

The Assyr- | ian came down | like the wolf | on the fold, |
And his co- | horts were gleam- | ing in pur- | ple and gold; |
And the sheen | of their spears | was like stars | on the sea, |
When the blue | wave rolls night- | ly on deep | Galilee. |

The first three lines can be regarded as practically perfect followings of the anapestic pattern; and the same is true of the first, third, and fourth foot in the last line. Only the foot *wave rolls night* is out of the picture; it consists of three syllables, each one of which is entitled to an accent. The prosodists must have a name for such a foot (´ ´ ´); but it need not concern us. The foot fits fairly into the pattern; and constant experiment has indicated that the pure anapest is not at home in English, and that one or the other of its initial unaccented syllables, or both, must be from time to time replaced by an accented syllable.

Suitable alterations change the Ring Lardner short story opening into anapestic verse:

Oh, my moth- | er says when | I start talk | ing,
That I nev- | er know when | I should stop. |
But as I | often tell | her, the one | time
That I get | any chance | is when she's |
Not around, | so I have | to make all |
That I can | of it tact- | fully then. |

This has required more changing than the two former alterations; and it should be noted that an unaccented syl-

lable is appended to the end of the first line, without harming the metre; and that an extra syllable, unaccented or accented as you prefer to designate it, is also added to the end of the third line.

Dactylic Verse.—The dactyl (´ ˘ ˘) is a foot of three syllables, the first accented, the last two unaccented. It may be indicated: *tum* ta ta; it is the reverse of the anapest, and may be regarded as a trochee with an added unaccented syllable at the end. Examples of dactylic three-syllabled words are: *attitude, burdensome, carrying, deviltry, edible, folio, dignity, merriment, happily, jovial, royalist, realist, adequate.* Dactylic combinations are also found in: *out of the, over the, under the, where in the, fighting a, beauty is, march into, who are the.* Tennyson's *The Charge of the Light Brigade* is largely in this metre:

Cannon to | right of them, |
Cannon to | left of them, |
Cannon in | front of them |
Volleyed and | thundered; |
Stormed at with | shot and shell, |
Boldly they | fought, and well. . . . |

The pattern here is dactylic. The first three lines contain each two perfect dactyls. The fourth line has a dactyl followed by a trochee; that is, the terminal unaccented syllable is omitted. It is clear that either one or both of the terminal unaccented syllables may be omitted in any line, without harming the dactylic flow. Line five has a dactyl followed by *shot and shell,* in reality an amphimacer (´ ˘ ´); so has line six. Obviously, if the line terminates

in a real dactyl (´ ⏑ ⏑), this calls for a trisyllabic rhyme (´ ⏑ ⏑). But, since their number is limited in English, and since they are unfamiliar, and since moreover a large number of triple rhymes in serious poetry or verse would be cloying, there is small wreckage in using such a foot as the amphimacer, ending with a terminal masculine rhyme; or in omitting one or both of the concluding unaccented syllables, to give a feminine rhyme or a masculine one. The English language is not well adapted to sustained verses in anapests or dactyls; perhaps some more leisurely and meridional speech, like Italian, would furnish a more natural home to these skipping metres.

Again, let us re-do the Lardner quotation as dactyls:

Mother says | when I start | talking |
I never | know when to | stop. |
But, as I | tell her, the | only time |
I get a | chance is when | she is |
Nowhere a- | round, so I | have to |
Make all I | can of it | then. |

I have availed myself to the fullest of the advantage of ending the lines on a trochee or on one accented syllable, omitting one or both of the unaccented syllables in the last foot, except in the third line; and that line's concluding foot is really an amphimacer, not a dactyl. A little more effort would make this perfect dactyls:

Mother says when I start gossiping
I never know when to end the thing.
But, as I tell her, my only chance
Is when she's nowhere around the place,

So I say all I can hurriedly
Then, when she's off in some other place.

Other Metric Feet.—So far, we have dealt in full with the following feet:

The iamb, the norm of iambic verse, (⏑ ′).
The trochee, of trochaic verse (′ ⏑).
The anapest, of anapestic verse (⏑ ⏑ ′).
The dactyl, of dactylic verse (′ ⏑ ⏑).

Among other feet which may be used in English, either to form a full metric pattern, or as variant feet, are:

The amphibrach (⏑ ′ ⏑).

This was used in one of the interpolated ballads in my *Jehovah:*

Ŭp Nébŏ's | hígh súmmĭt | óne climbed ĭn | thĕ dáybrĕak;
Fŏm Nébŏ's | lóne crést nóne | rĕturned tŏ | thĕ péoplĕ.
Thus Moses, beloved of Jehovah, has journeyed
Again to his fathers—and none saw his going.

The scansion of the first two lines is indicated in full, to show how alien the foot is to English. The first and last feet of line one are perfect amphibrachs, as are three feet in the second line; but three of the feet in the two lines are formed by two accented syllables followed by one unaccented one: in fact, foot two in line two may be another of those amorphous feet consisting of three accents (′ ′ ′).

The amphimacer (′ ⏑ ′).
The spondee (′ ′).

The spondee is constantly used in English verse as a variant.

The pyrrhic (˘ ˘).

This is an inconceivable foot in English; for we only regard as a foot a collection of syllables possessing at least one accent. By a stretch of our conceptions, this may occur in iambic or trochaic verse; but it is perhaps wiser to limit the conception of a foot in English verse to a group of syllables containing at least one accented syllable.

The tribrach (˘ ˘ ˘).

This is, by the same logic, best regarded as impossible in our verse.

The paeon (´ ˘ ˘ ˘).
The choriamb (´ ˘ ˘ ´).

Browning, in the opening *Cavalier Tune,* apparently utilized this foot in a dactylic pattern:

Kéntish Sir Byng | stood for his King,

Bidding the | crop-headed | Parliament | swing. |

What he actually did was to omit, after *Byng* and *king,* the two unaccented syllables which normally terminate a dactyl; so that this can be best regarded as a succession of dactyls, with the terminals lopped off in certain places.

There are many other feet listed in classic prosodies; but they need not concern the practitioner in English verse.

The Use of Variations.—The beauty of English verse is that it permits increasingly almost any conceivable variation, at any place in the metrical pattern. English verse, in the ages of Dryden and Pope, became rigidified and

fossilized into one dominant pattern, the rhymed couplet of five iambic feet. The Romantic poets, and the Victorians, especially Swinburne, returned to the use of more varied rhythms; but, in general, the tendency still was to regard the metric pattern as something rather sacred. And then two main streams of diversification of rhythm commenced. The first, rooted as far back as certain parts of the King James Bible and the poems of Ossian, led through Walt Whitman, Adah Isaacs Menken, Henley, and others, to the polyrhythmic or free verse poetry of today, which builds its poetic effects by variety within some dominant tendency, as a rising or a falling rhythm. The other consisted in constantly widening the liberties that could be taken inside the pattern; and its greatest practitioner is ordinarily said to be the American, Robert Frost. But hundreds of others have aided in the process; and the precedent for this extends back as far as English poetry extends.

Take Shakespeare's sonnets, which are assumed to be in the conservative tendency. The scansion scheme appears from the first line of the first sonnet:

From fair- | est crea- | tures we | desire | increase. |

Take now the sixth line of the same sonnet:

Feed'st thy | light's flame | with self- | substan- | tial fuel. |

Here we have (instead of five iambs), a trochee, a spondee, two iambs, and a concluding amphibrach (that is, an iamb with an extra unaccented syllable at the end). A trochee may be inserted at any place. It is true that the pedants say

that a sonnet should not open on a trochee, since the first few feet, they say, should indicate beyond peradventure of a doubt the pattern to be followed. But Shakespeare's third sonnet opens,

Lóok ĭn | ˘thy gĺass, | ˘and tél̆l | ˘the fáce | ˘thou viéwĕst |

Where Shakespeare erred, in this instance at least, it is safe to follow. The seventh, eighth, thirteenth, fourteenth, and many more of the sonnets open with a trochaic foot. Variation is more than the spice of poetry; it is the life of poetry.

Or take a line like:

Ăn̆d strétch- | ĕd ḿe- | ˘tre óf | ˘an ań- | tiq̆ue sóng,

from the seventeenth. We have marked the third foot as if it were an iamb; but it is really a pyrrhic (⏑ ⏑); and, since the best understanding of English versification discards this, the proper scansion would be:

Ăn̆d strétch- | ĕd ḿetr̆e ŏf | ˘an ań- | tiq̆ue sóng, |

or some other division that gives only four feet to the line. Take the last line of the thirty-third:

Súns ŏf | ˘the wórld | ˘may stáin | ˘when héav- | ĕn's ŭn stáinĕth.

Here the last foot is an anapest with an extra unaccented syllable; or else the fourth is an amphibrach, and the fifth an amphibrach or an iamb with an extra syllable. A grace note, an added unaccented syllable, appears after the accented syllable of the fourth note. This is a variation which

may appear anywhere in the line. Take a line from the sonnet before the last numbered:

Thése poór | rúde línes | of thy deceased lover.

This clearly opens with two spondees; for the opening *these* is entitled to an accent. Take the line:

Báre rú- | ined chóirs, | where late | the sweet | bírds sáng, |

with an opening and a closing spondee. A line in the eighty-first sonnet proceeds:

Where breath | most breáthes | éven ín | the moúths | of mén, |

again evidencing the use of a grace-note, perhaps accented, this time in the third foot. The hundred and seventh has as its second line:

Of the wíde world | dréaming | on thíngs | to cóme.

This is a baffler. Two short syllables are followed by two accented ones; then a trochee, and then two iambs. Regard the first four syllables as you please: it is a definite variation, substituting for two iambic feet a sequence of unaccented, unaccented, accented, accented.

And all this in Shakespeare's sonnets!

For the usage of the more matured Shakespeare, take these lines from *The Winter's Tale:*

A malady

Most ín- | cident- | to maíds; | bold óxlips and |

The crówn | impér- | ial; | lílies | of all kínds, |

The flów- | er-de-luce | being óne! | O, these | I lack |

The second of these lines ends with a sequence (´ ´ ˘ ˘) as baffling as the opening of the line "Of the wide world dreaming on things to come." Accent, accent, unaccent, unaccent—it can only be described as a pleasing variation, and accepted as such. Notice how utterly without accent the final syllable, *and,* is, if read properly. The third line ends on an anapest; the fourth has two anapests within it. Of such is the kingdom of poetic variation.

Examples could be taken from any of the poets. Keats, in *Hyperion* most of all a masterly craftsman, has lines as lovely as—

No stir of air was there,

Not so | much life | as on | a summer's day

Robs not | one light | seed from | the feath | er'd grass,

But where the dead leaf fell, there did it rest.

This splendid selection is a lesson in vocabulary, with only two dissyllables in thirty-four words; and the last two lines are as notable an object-lesson in metrics, with (properly read) five accented syllables one after the other opening the first of the two concluding lines, and a sequence of four accented syllables (*dead leaf fell, there*) in the last line. A few pages on occurs the line:

Thea! | Thea! | Thea! | where is | Saturn? |

consisting of five trochees—and this in the midst of a poem with a metric pattern of five iambs to the line! Yes, this is entirely permissible, in poetry. Poetry is made by poets; it is the critics who come afterwards and lay down

laws, which the living poets of the past naturally never heard of, and did not observe; and which the living poets of today and tomorrow will regard as lightly as the practice of the former singers regarded them.

Here is Edna St. Vincent Millay, in three lines of iambic pattern:

Físhes | would drówn; | and the áll góv- | erning reíns
Would tangle in the frantic hands of God
And the worlds gál | lop héad | long to | destrúction.

The first line, opening with a trochee, has, after its second foot, this sequence: unaccent, unaccent, accent, accent; and then a concluding anapest. The third line opens with the same sequence, and ends with an extra unaccented syllable.

In Robert Frost we find such lines as:

And spread her apron to it. She put out her hand. . . .
Strange how such innocence gets its own way. . . .
And the saw snarled and rattled, snarled and rattled. . . .
So. But the hand was gone already.

In this line the monosyllable *So* is followed by a pause that takes the place of the unaccented element in its own foot, and of the entire foot following.

Little—less—nothing! And that ended it.

Frost's verse, largely because of his masterly conversational treatment of metre, is far more living than that of most contemporary verse-writers. This is no argument for you to go as far as he has gone in variations in the scansion

pattern. If your natural utterance is similar to his, you will, once you have mastered the technique of verse, in your sincerity reach his height of variety. In any case, you will first learn strict scansion, and then learn how to disregard it, to play tunes above and below it, superimposing your variations upon the framework of the rigid pattern.

Combinations of Metres.—It is possible to make your metric pattern a combination of metres, as, for instance, a mixture of iambs and anapests, either arranged in a definite alternation, or used indiscriminately whenever the inner music dictates. In occasional English folk ballads we find this device employed, as this opening stanza of *Alison Gross* attests:

Ŏ Ál- | ĭsŏn Grŏss, | thăt lĭves | ĭn yŏn tŏwĕr,
Thĕ úg- | lĭĕst wĭtch | ĭn thĕ nŏrth | cŏuntrĭe,
Has trysted me one day up to her bower,
And many fair speeches she made to me.

Or take the second stanza of *Binnorie:*

Hĕ cŏurt- | ĕd thĕ ĕld- | ĕst wĭth glŏve | ănd rĭng,
Bŭt hĕ lŏved | thĕ yŏung- | ĕst ăbŏve | ăll thĭngs. |

We find the same in *Barbara Allen:*

He sent his man in to her then,
To the town where she was dwelling,
"O haste and come to my master dear,
If your name be Barbara Allen."

For a long stretch this passed out of English poetry. We find it reappearing in Browning,

While the chaf- | finch sings | on the or- | chard bough |

In England—now!

The same author's *Evelyn Hope* uses this blend of iambs and anapest; or, in this poem, you may interpret it as a blend of trochee and dactyl, for the tendency in the poem is to open the line with an accent. Elizabeth Barrett Browning's *A Musical Instrument* has the same type of rhythm as *Evelyn Hope,* as has Matthew Arnold's *The Forsaken Merman.* James Thomson, in the title line and throughout *Give a Man a Horse He Can Ride,* employs the blending of rhythms. In the poetry of the last decade and a half it is constantly found; Robert Frost's *The Road Not Taken,* William Rose Benet's *His Ally,* are only two poems in point.

Accent Pattern Instead of Metric.—Coleridge, in *Christabel,* rediscovered the old method of writing English verse from a different standpoint—that is, by counting the accents in a line, instead of dealing with definite metric feet. Thus, each of his lines in the poem named is supposed to have four accents, with any number of unaccented syllables, in any arrangement. Although he occasionally, in the poem, forgot his intended pattern, the principle is sound. Note the scansion of the opening of the poem:

'Tis the mid- | dle of night | by the cas- | tle clock,

And the owls | have awak- | ened the crow- | ing cock. |

Tu- | whit! | Tu- | whoo! |

And hark, | again; | The crow- | ing cock, |

How drow- | sily | it crew.

Here we have (except for the fifth line, which I cannot explain except as a lapse of Coleridge's) always four accents to the line, and a distinct irregularity in the location of the accented syllables, and in their number or complete omission. Thomas Hood's *Song of the Shirt* is one among a number of poems which, consciously or unconsciously, utilized the same accent pattern:

With fingers weary and worn,
  With eyelids heavy and red,
A woman sat in unwomanly rags
  Plying her needle and thread—
Stitch—stitch—stitch!
  In poverty, hunger, and dirt,
And still with a voice of dolorous pitch
  She sang the "Song of the Shirt."

By now, you can scan this for yourself, noting that the pattern calls for 3, 3, 4, 3 accents, and then the same repeated.

The most amazing modern extension of this principle is found in Walter de la Mare's magnificent *The Listeners.* The cue to his rhythm is found in the even-numbered lines, which always have three definite beats. The only proper reading of the odd lines, first, third, and so on, is to give

them three, and only three, accents. We then have a result as memorable as this quatrain indicates:

But ón- | ly a hóst | of phántom lísteners |
That dwélt | in the lóne | house thén, |
Stood lís- | tening in the quí- | et of the móonlight |
To that voíce | from the wórld | of mén. |

In the first line appears one foot of six syllables, three unaccented followed by an accent and two more unaccented; in the third line we have two feet of five syllables each. At least one foot in the poem has seven syllables. But the principle is simple—three accented syllables to the line, and as many unaccented ones, and in such places, as the inner musical ear dictated.

My own *Antillean* is a case in point. I give the whole poem:

A wild world, built on the overturn
Of all our cautious meticulous sobriety—
Days lushly dazzling, with burning sun
And pelting tropical rain: and the unpierced dark,
The unlanced night, of the jungle.

Lose yourself
Within its cool emerald deeps, vined
And incredible. The ears are deafened, the eyes are dazed,
By raucous screams of bird and fiery flower.
Green-bearded trees, and ringed and bristly palm-boles,

Wall you—the palm's green young spear couchant against
The bald sky, then a courteous downward feathering;
And a thousand lesser lives rooted upon it,
Wild pineapples, the liana's sinewy thongs,
And scornful orchids that spurn earth and tall heaven
And blossom between, in aloof ecstasy,
Antennaed and winged like poised butterflies,
Swarming up like a disturbed hive of gold bees,
Drooping like purple laughter. Here the bewildered
Pine loses his clenched needles, and broad-leaved
Branches never bare to the near sun.
Below you mimosas sensitively shrink at a touch,
Cower at a breath: and before your wide eyes
The hovering hum of a winged emerald,
Poising before some vast scarlet scaffolding
Of petalled wonder. The poinciana's scimitars
Hang rigidly, rusty from inaction,
Sullen for disuse. Mud catacombs
Of ants gall the near tree boles: overhead
The coral flowers crust the sip-tree's bareness,
The mountain rose droops gross globes of beauty,
Multiple wonders of bloom. The immortelles,
Like hill-high rubied domes, riot about you;
And banyan roots, cording their mossed neighbors,
Feed earthily one tree into a grove.
Ferns drip from the branches, or scale their gray stretch,
And lift about you into slim trees
Crouched from the sun. A thousand twined splendors,
Barring your way but to the whetted steel,
Walling you from all that man's tardy stumbling
Has shrined as sacred. You are alone, but for
The red howlers, the bickering *qu'est-il-dits,*
The squawking parrots, the maddened trees, vines, shrubs,
The brilliant riot,—the jungle.

And you and I
Find nothing alien in it all. We have
Already soared over overturned decorums:
We were born so. Nakedly, lushly dazzling,
We flower wildly in our own wild jungle,
Creatures shaped by a hotter breath of truth,
A wilder rain of exquisite wild visions,
And the unlanced night of naught-fearing souls.
We are the jungle, heart and soul and dream:
As passionately intricately bound
One to the other, as the hot splendid sun
To this green Paradise: and like that emerald
Heaven, welcoming to our breasts,
Your mooned comfort and my taut embrace,
All that the jungle offers or knows. I and you,
O incredible dream made flesh, bright Gloria,
At home at last—wildly at home at last!

I am not going to attempt to scan this; it would be too slow a process. It was written by a poet, and not by a critic; and, now that the critic faces it, it seems wiser to leave it to your own scanning mercies. No better example can be offered of the extent to which variations can go, to a metric pattern or an accent one. In this case, the underlying pattern was clearly either the five-foot iambic or the five-accent-to-a-line; but the theme was the jungle and its riotousness, and the poem came so. Let the critic confess that he does not dare tamper with this product. It certainly exhibits the modern tendency toward variation, either as a haloed model or a horrible example.

Let us turn to one of the triumphs of modern poetry,

G. K. Chesterton's *Lepanto,* and watch some interesting divagations in rhythm that resulted from it. Here are a few of the memorable lines:

Dim drums throbbing, in the hills half heard,
Where only on a nameless throne a crownless prince has stirred,
Where, risen from a doubtful seat and half-attained stall,
The last knight of Europe takes weapons from the wall, . . .
Strong gongs groaning as the guns boom far,
Don John of Austria is going to the war,
Stiff flags straining in the night-blasts cold
In the gloom black-purple, in the glint old-gold,
Torchlight crimson on the copper kettle-drums,
Then the tuckets, then the trumpets, then the cannon, and he comes.
Don John laughing in the brave beard curled,
Spurning of his stirrups like the thrones of all the world,
Holding his head up for a flag of all the free.
Love-light of Spain—hurrah!
Death-light of Africa!
Don John of Austria
Is riding to the sea.

This is surely varied; yet its norm or metric pattern is found in such lines (in the selection given) as the second, third, and the twelfth. Playing against this is the beat of the feet consisting of one accented word, with the unaccented one omitted, as in the great first, fifth, and seventh lines here. Here we have a magically successful use of rhythm, which stirs the blood as Chesterton is so easily able to do.

This tune was communicated to Vachel Lindsay by his friend Floyd Dell, who read *Lepanto* to the then slightly

known Springfield poet. Out of it emerged Lindsay's *Congo,* with a music similar enough to trace the family resemblance on its face, and yet with a different norm—a four-accent line, instead of a seven foot line. Here are typical lines of Lindsay's poem; the accented syllables have been at times italicized, to make the rhythm clearer:

Fat black *bucks* in a *wine*-barrel *room,*
*Bar*rel-house *kings,* with *feet* un*sta*ble.
Sagged and *reeled* and *pound*ed on the *ta*ble,
Pounded on the table. . . .
Then I had re*lig*ion, *then* I had a *vis*ion,
I could not turn from their revel with derision.
Then I saw the *Con*go, *creep*ing through the *black,*
Cutting through the forest with a golden track. . . .
A *good* old *Ne*gro in the *slums* of the *town*
Preached at a *sis*ter for her *vel*vet *gown,*
Howled at a brother for his low-down ways,
His *prowl*ing, *guz*zling, *sneak*-thief *days.*

The last quoted line of this splendid product reminds us anew of the norm—four accents to the line. In this last quoted line, we have a line of pure iambics, unless the last foot be called a spondee. But the third line has a foot with four syllables—three unaccented, following an accented syllable, *pounded on the.* Lindsay liked this music so much that he at once repeated the half line in which it occurs. The same four-syllabled foot occurs twice in the fifth line quoted, once in the next line, twice in the next, twice in the next, and once each in the next three. In other words, Lindsay is using quite as a matter of course this foot

(´ ˘ ˘ ˘); and, if he learns the fact from this study of his poem, it may give him quite a shock. For it is to be doubted if he knew or cared what was the exact constitution of his feet in this poem; the poem came, to a man adept in versification, and he let it sing itself throughout its successful course. *The Santa Fe Trail* uses the same foot, as does *The Firemen's Ball.* In my own *De Glory Road,* a similar foot appears sixteen times in the first eighteen lines, occurring in three lines both as the second and third foot of the line, and ten times as the third foot. I call it a similar foot, for it contains four syllables; but they are arranged as three unaccented syllables followed by an accent. Examples are:

I'm gwíne | ter drap my loád | upon de Gló- | ry Roád. . . . |
An' I riz | up f'um mah pal- | let, an' I cry, | "Hyah's me!" . . . |
Ter ride | erlong behin' | me up ter Par- | adise. |

Orrick Johns, in *Little Things,* uses the same foot:

The fra- | grance of the for- | est when it wakes | at dawn. |

Margaret Widdemer uses it in *Factories:*

I have shut | my little sis- | ter in from life | and light. |

Taken by itself, any one of these four syllabled feet, in the lines above, would seem to be divisible properly into two feet of two syllables each. But each of these comes from a poem of some length, in which the rhythm is marked by four accents to the line. The poet's purpose, the poet's

rhythmic tune, requires the interpretation that we have given.

The definite modern tendency, then, is toward an increasing variety within the metric pattern. This is achieved by substitution of similar or dissimilar feet, at any place within the line; by a rhythm scheme permitting two or more feet, alternated or used in any sequence; by rhythm measured solely by the number of accented syllables in the line, letting the position and number of unaccented syllables be dictated by the writer's own sense of harmony; and by such further devices as definite changes of rhythm, if the poem is a long one. The variations utilized today are vastly greater in number and in character than any such devices between the hour of Shakespeare and the end of the Romantic period, in bookish or cultured poetry. But you can still find, in two types of folk poetry, a use of variety similar to the best modern usage: and that is in the folk ballads, and in that collection called *Mother Goose.* To supplement the best that critical books can give you, go to your favorite poems, and study their rhythmic usages; and it will be fortunate for you if these favorites include something from the moderns and from Mother Goose.

Number of Feet in a Line.—A line of metric verse is described by stating two facts: the kind of foot employed, and the number of feet in a line. The number of feet may range, theoretically, from one to infinity. W. S. Gilbert, in *Lost Mr. Blake,* has several lines of more than twenty feet each. But this is a monstrosity in metrics, and in

general the extreme range is eight feet. When the number of feet is six, seven, or eight, there is an irresistible tendency, in reading the poem, to separate the long line into two brief divisions of three or four feet each. A whole section of classical prosody is devoted to the pause which indicates this division, with a technical vocabulary ranging from such simple beginnings as *cesura* and *dieresis* to such atrocities as *trithemimeral* and *hepthemimeral.* This is about as important to poetry and the writing of it as would be a discussion of the Abyssinian names for scrambled eggs. You must attain variety in your lines; naturally, you will insert pauses from time to time, and their positions will vary. That is all that you need know. If your soul thrills to the outre sterilities of academic prosody, look up cesura in a large dictionary or encyclopedia, and see how far the schoolmen can wander from the realities of poetry.

In general, you are surer of comprehension by your hearer if you speak of a one-foot iambic line, than if you speak of iambic monometer. Here are the more pretentious terms, with their simpler equivalents: monometer, a one-foot line; dimeter, a two-foot one; trimeter, three feet; tetrameter, four feet; pentameter, five feet; hexameter, six feet; heptameter, seven feet; octometer, eight feet; and so on. There is every reason, in speech, to prefer the simpler terms. These lines

And so
We glow
To sing
The spring!

are iambic lines of one foot each, or one-foot iambics, or iambic monometers. Two-foot trochaics, or trochaic dimeter, would be:

Let us wander
Over yonder,
To the highlands
Of these islands.

Three-foot dactylic lines would be:

So, with the sun at meridian,
Ephraim's hero, bold Gideon,
Smote the insulting Numidian.

Four-foot anapestic lines appear in:

To the end of the world, to the rim of the sky,
With the tang of the salt, and a conquering cry!

A five-foot iambic line would be:

So foul and fair a day I have not seen.

A six-foot dactylic line is used by Longfellow in *Evangeline:*

This is the forest primeval, the murmuring pines and the hemlocks,

with an obvious pause in the third foot, due to the unwieldly sprawl of the line. An example of the seven-foot iambic line, with a definite break after the fourth foot in each instance, appears in many ballads, as in this opening of Macaulay's:

Now glory to the Lord of Hosts, from whom all glories are;
And glory to our sovereign lord, King Henry of Navarre!

It is possible to devise a line of any number of any variety of feet. The aspirant in poetry will always seek to arrive at some logical and suitable line-length and type of foot, in harmony with whatever his subject may be.

Blank Verse and Heroic Blank Verse.—Blank verse is any unrhymed verse. The lines may be of any length, uniform or irregular, and any metric foot may be used, or any combination of rhythms; so long as there is no rhyme present, the product is blank verse. The product remains blank verse, whether divided into stanzas or not. Most of the lines in the plays of Shakespeare, Milton's three longest poems, are blank verse iambic pentameters or five-foot iambics; *Hiawatha* is blank verse written in four-foot trochaics; *Evangeline* is blank verse in six-foot dactyls; the poetry of Whitman, Sandburg, and all unrhymed free verse or polyrhythmic poetry, is also properly included under blank verse. Blank verse is easy to write; poetry in blank verse, most critics assure us, is difficult to write, due to the absence of a rhyme-pattern, which permits the versifier to maunder on in a sprawling fashion, within the yanked-up check-rein of the rhyme-pattern. Charles Lamb's *The Old Familiar Faces* and Tennyson's *Tears, Idle Tears* are examples of successful lyrics written in blank verse. One stanza of the latter is:

> Ah, sad and strange as in dark summer dawns
> The earliest pipe of half-awakened birds
> To dying ears, when unto dying eyes
> The casement slowly grows a glimmering square;
> So sad, so strange, the days that are no more.

If a poet finds it impossible to handle rhyme without an ever-present sense of strain and artificiality in his work, there is the continent of blank verse, which offers space enough for any poetic utterance.

The stanza from Tennyson is in iambic five-foot blank verse; and this measure, the most popular in English versification, is called *heroic blank verse.* Milton, in describing the verse of his *Paradise Lost,* utters some true talk on the subject:

> The measure is English heroic verse without rime, as that of Homer in Greek, and of Virgil in Latin—rime being no necessary adjunct or true ornament of poem or good verse, in longer works especially, but the invention of a barbarous age, to set off wretched matter and lame meter; graced indeed since by the use of some famous modern poets, carried away by custom, but much to their own vexation, hindrance, and constraint to express many things otherwise, and for the most part worse, than else they would have expressed them.

He was rather hard upon rhyme, describing it as "the jingling sound of like endings," and speaking again of "the troublesome and modern bondage of riming." Shelley, in his preface to *The Revolt of Islam,* says—

> I have adopted the stanza of Spenser (a measure inexpressibly beautiful) not because I consider it a finer model of poetic harmony than the blank verse of Shakespeare and Milton, but because in the latter there is no shelter for mediocrity.

Rhyme is by no means essential to poetry; used at its best, it pleases the ear, and its deft use lends an added grace. The tendency of the greatest poets has been to aban-

don rhyme, as their technique matured: Shakespeare, Milton, Keats, Whitman, are examples in point. It is well to try both methods.

Free Verse; Polyrhythmic Poetry.—Nor have the rhythmical devices of poetry in English been exhausted yet. Again and again, in the King James Bible, we get an expression that is clearly above the variety of prose rhythm, and is yet more varied than we have expected from metric feet:

Lord, thou hast been our dwelling-place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God. Thou turnest man to destruction; and sayest, Return, ye children of men. . . .

To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven: a time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted; . . . a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance. . . .

Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil, rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth. . . .

Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare, if thou hast understanding. . . . When the morning stars sang together, and the sons of God shouted for joy? Or who shut up the sea with doors, when it brake forth, as if it had issued out of the womb? . . . When . . . I said hitherto shalt thou come, but no further; and here shall thy proud waves be stayed.

We find this strain in Anglo-Saxon poetry, which became outmoded in Langland's time; we find it reappearing in Ossian, in the prophetic books of Blake, in Ulrica's song in *Ivanhoe;* we find it superbly dominant in the great chants of Walt Whitman:

Out of the cradle endlessly rocking,
Out of the mocking-bird's throat, the musical shuttle,
Out of the Ninth-month midnight,
Over the sterile sands, and the fields beyond, where the child leaving his bed wandered alone, bareheaded, barefoot,
Down from the showered halo,
Up from the mystic play of shadows twining and twisting as if they were alive,

with its exquisite inner lyric,

Shine! shine! shine!
Pour down your warmth, great sun!
While we bask, we two together.

Two together!
Winds blow south, or winds blow north,
Day come white, or night come black,
Home, or rivers and mountains from home,
Singing all time, minding no time,
While we two keep together.

From Whitman alone more than a score of other examples, as inevitable in rhythm and phrasing, can be found. Whitman had no name for his form of poetry, calling it merely his "barbaric yawp" or his chants. Adah Isaacs Menken, a causelessly neglected American singer of the same period, independently discovered the same form.

Slightly later, Stephen Crane used it more astringently, in briefer lines in briefer poems. It appears in Henley, in Heine, in French verse, and then reappeared in America in that strange poetic erysipelas that broke out over our body social just after 1910. Carl Sandburg, James Oppenheim, the Imagists, the eccentric *Others* group, and many others used it, each user leaving his individual stamp upon his product. It has received many names: perhaps *free verse,* the least appropriate of all, has won too great a head-start to be dislodged. More appropriate are the names *polyrhythmic verse* or *polymetric verse,* which describe it as a verse containing many rhythms or many metres within the individual line. With less reason it has been called *cadenced verse,* and academic minds have sought to tie its phrases up to the strophes of the Greek poets, which were Greek phrases in lyric song measured by the time it took the chorus, in Greek drama, to circle once around the altar. There is no gain in going so far afield.

Polyrhythmic poetry can be scanned as well as any other. Here is the scansion of a typical passage from Whitman's *Song of Myself:*

Préss clóse | báre-bósom̆ed | níght, | préss clóse | m̆agnétic̆ |
nóurish̆in̆g | níght, |

Níght | ŏf sóuth wínds, | níght | ŏf th̆e féw | laŕge stárs, |

Stíll nódd̆in̆g | níght, | mád | náked̆ | súmm̆er | níght; |

Smíle, | Ŏ vŏlúpt̆uŏus | cóol-breáthed | eaŕth; |

Earth | of the slumbering | and liquid | trees! |

Earth | of departed | sunset— | earth | of the mountains |
misty-topt! |

Earth | of the vitreous | pour | of the full moon | just tinged | with
blue! |

Earth | of shine | and dark | mottling | the tide | of the river! |

Earth | of the limpid | gray | of clouds | brighter | and clearer |
for my sake! |

Far-swooping | elbowed | earth— | rich | apple- | blossomed |
earth! |

Smile, | for your lover | comes. |

The foot-division followed has been that natural to normal reading of the selection—and, it will be recalled, a similar foot-division established that the first three lines of "To be or not to be" were in reality lines with only four feet, where the pattern called for five—four feet of far more elaborate variety of rhythm than an iambic norm is supposed to justify. A more obvious pattern could be indicated here, with words divided; but this at least follows the normal flow of speech. We have here twenty-three feet consisting each of a simple accented syllable. This selection clearly exhibits a falling rhythm—that is, one opening on an accent, followed by unaccented syllables—a sort of glorified trochee-dactylic movement. We

have five spondees, eight trochees, and five iambs. We have eleven three-syllabled feet, of six varieties; six four-syllabled feet, of two varieties; and three five-syllabled feet, all of two unaccents, one accent, two unaccents. When it is recalled that de la Mare's *Listeners* had many feet of five and six syllables, and one of seven, it is clear that Whitman here has not strayed out of the field of feet properly usable in poetry.

But there is small gain in applying old-fashioned scansion to polyrhythmic poetry. The flow of the rhythm is a subtler and more intangible thing than the scansion indicates. Whitman, in his more controlled flights, wrote with a fairly logical line division; that is, he ended his lines where the breath normally gives out in reading, or made them twice this long, expecting an internal pause in the line. Thus the line next to the last is clearly in two definite rhythmical phrases:

> Far-swooping elbowed earth!
> Rich apple-blossomed earth!

At times he let his lines sprawl to lengths commensurate with Gilbert's extravagant lines in *Lost Mr. Blake;* just as Sandburg has set up, as one line, this exquisite succession of phrases:

> Pocahontas' body, lovely as a poplar, sweet as a red haw in November or a pawpaw in May, did she wonder? does she remember? . . . in the dust, in the cool tombs?

The last seven words here are the refrain, repeated at the end of each of the long lines. And each of these lines is

what would be, with more logical division, set up as a stanza, or a group of lines. The extreme end of this process appears in Sandburg's *Fog,* describing the fog as a cat:

> It sits looking
> over harbor and city
> on silent haunches
> and then moves on.

H. D. writes lines as astringent; John Gould Fletcher sprawls all over the page with his long lines; and so the variance in practice goes on. To summarize technically what a wide familiarity with the best polyrhythmic poetry indicates as to its nature, it is an expression of thoughts in a rhythm definitely tending toward regularity, but with constant minor variations. It is poetry: poets have written it, poets and others have hailed it. The definitions of poetry have been broadened, by this successful usage of the medium, until they include it.

But no rules can be given for the writing of it, except that it must avoid the utter variety of rhythm of prose, where there is no tendency toward regularity; and that it must likewise avoid the device of metre, or a succession of regular feet, with the accepted variations which good metric verse shows. Where you have the two things coexisting, the expression of thoughts which evoke those emotions that poetry evokes, and a tendency toward regularity in your rhythm which lifts the expression above prose rhythm, you have polyrhythmic poetry. Metric blank verse is a deceptive quagmire, as has been indicated; polyrhyth-

mic verse is even more of a quicksands. It looks excessively simple. And indeed polyrhythmic verse is simple. But to achieve poetry in the medium is difficult, for you have abandoned many of the easier aids to the mind's receptivity to verse as poetry, in abandoning a pleasurably recognizable metre, and, as a rule, in abandoning rhyme and strict stanza arrangements.

Metric rhythm, variations in metre, combinations of metre, lines marked solely by a definite number of accents, polyrhythmic verse—these are the upward steps toward complexity. And further complexity means prose rhythm, and an end to poetry. The complex is ever more difficult to achieve than the simple; and the highest poetry can be found anywhere in the ascending scale.

Line Length in Verse.—The problem of how long your line should be is especially important in writing polyrhythmic poetry. There is a persuasive theory, first expressed by Oliver Wendell Holmes, himself a doctor, that the line length marks physiologically the normal breathing of the poet. The long Greek hexameters, the norm of Greek verse, indicate that full-breasted warriors, or bards well trained bodily, were the singers. The short rhythms of children's verse, such as *Mother Goose,* show the natural immaturity of childhood's breath-content. The extreme briefness of much Imagist verse points toward a lack of breath and bodily health in the singers.

The original five-foot line in English verse was an end-stopped line; that is, the meaning normally ended with the end of the line. This is found in the earliest specimens of

the metre in English; in Shakespeare's early work; in the frigid formality of the rhymed five-foot couplets of Dryden, Pope, and their satellites, both back-scratchers and backbiters. But this bred an excessive monotony, with the definite line length, and a pause in meaning every ten to twelve syllables. Thus Shakespeare grew from the younger practice of,

> True, I talk of dreams,
> Which are the children of an idle brain,
> Begot of nothing but vain fantasy,
> Which is as thin of substance as the air,
> And more inconstant than the wind, who wooes
> Even now the frozen bosom of the North,
> And, being angered, puffs away from thence,
> Turning his face to the dew-dropping South,

with only one carry-on line (the fifth) in eight lines; to the maturity of—

> These our actors,
> As I foretold you, were all spirits, and
> Are melted into air, into thin air. . . .
> We are such stuff
> As dreams are made on, and our little life
> Is rounded with a sleep.

But in end-stop lines in polyrhythmic verse there is no monotony; for the line itself contains the antidote to monotony. The best practice in polyrhythmic verse is to end the line at the logical place where the pause for breathing must come; and without fault all the lines may be end-stop ones.

A word may be said about other conventions. The quo-

tation from Sandburg's *Fog* showed a disuse of capital letters to open the separate lines or verses. This convention —the use of a capital letter to begin every line of poetry —may be discarded, if you find any gain in eliminating it. You may discard any convention of English speech that you wish, until you have a product such as these lines from E. E. Cummings, a poet who regards himself as a modern, as Milton regarded himself as a modern, and as Homer did:

life hurl my
yes, crumbles hand (ful released conarefetti)ev eryflitter, inga.
where
mil (lions of aflickf) litter ing brightmillion ofS hurl; edindodg:
ing
whom are Eyes shy-dodge is bright cruMbshandful, quick-hurl
edinwho
Is flittercrumbs, fluttercrimbs are floatfallin,g; allwhere:
a: crimflitterinish, is arefloatsis ingfallall! mil, shy, milbrightlions

Robert Graves, an English critic, says of this that it is "neither pure nor abstract, but realistic, wilfully linked to history," meaning in these words to praise the product. Shakespeare could have written Hamlet's most-quoted soliloquy similarly:

life maybe my
no, racks mind (ful outrageous sevencomefortune) wh atasea,
blesa. here
dy (ing is aslumb) er ing dreamsbillion ofS dream; edpage:
docFreud

and so on. Only, then there could not have been these cen-

turies of argument as to whether Hamlet was sane or not.

You may eliminate any convention of speech you please; but, if you wander too far, you must pay the price, in the suspicions of alienists and sane readers, and in an abiding unintelligibility except to yourself.

II Rhyme

Rhyme: Correct Rhyme.—Rhyme is the identity in sound of an accented vowel in a word, usually the last one accented, with all the sounds following, while the consonantal sounds immediately preceding differ. Examples are:

ate, bait, plate, freight, syncopate.
being, seeing, ski-ing.
bilious, punctilious, supercilious.

The spelling makes no difference; the sole determinant is the pronunciation. This is why Walker's *Rhyming Dictionary,* and all others based upon spelling, are awkward to use. For to secure the available rhymes to *ate,* you would have to look up all the words ending in *-ate, -ait,* and *-eight;* and even then you would not have discovered *tête-à-tête* and perhaps other more oddly spelt rhymes. Such a rhyming lexicon as Loring's, or any other based upon sound rather than spelling, is the proper kind to use.

One-syllabled rhymes are called single or masculine rhymes. Examples are:

be, tree, sea, apostrophe, ability.
risk, obelisk, odalisque
fling, ring, carolling

Two-syllabled rhymes are called double or feminine rhymes. Examples are:

playing, straying, delaying.
gleaming, redeeming, unbeseeming.
needed, beaded, he did
sing now, bring now

Three-syllabled rhymes are called triple rhymes:

breakable, unmistakable
lyrical, miracle, empirical, satirical
singing now, bringing now
rest of it, crest of it, palimpsest of it

There are rhymes of four or an even larger number of syllables. Serious poetry uses single rhymes most of all; double rhymes frequently; and, more rarely, the more polysyllabled rhymes. Browning, Thomas Hood, and other adepts, in serious verse, have used triple and more elaborate rhymes, at times successfully.

End rhyme is rhyme used at the end of the line. In the following example, by Leigh Hunt, the rhymed syllables are italicized:

Jenny kissed me when we *met*
  Running to the chair I *sat in.*
Time, you thief, who love to *get*
  Sweets upon your list, put *that in!*
Say I'm weary, say I'm *sad,*
  Say that health and wealth have *missed me;*
Say I'm growing old, but *add*—
    Jenny *kissed me.*

The odd-numbered lines in this have the single rhymes,

met, get; sad, add; the even lines have the double rhymes, *sat in, that in, missed me, kissed me.* We will study the various positions which end rhymes assume, in dealing with the stanza, or formal group of lines.

Rhyme is at times used within the line, to give added effectiveness, by a closer repetition of the rhyming sounds. The sixth line above has an *internal rhyme,* health and wealth. Take this passage from Sidney Lanier's *The Symphony:*

> "Each day, all day," these poor folk say,
> "In the same old *year-long, drear-long* way,
> We *weave* in the *mills* and *heave* in the *kilns,*
> We *sieve* mine-meshes under the *hills,*
> And *thieve* much gold from the Devil's bank *tills,*
> To re*lieve,* O God, what manner of *ills?*"

Here *year-long* and *drear-long* rhyme; as do *weave, heave, sieve, thieve,* and re*lieve;* as well as *mills,* with the last four terminal rhymes. This mounts with dreadful cumulative effect. In light verse, internal rhyme is especially pleasing:

Come let us weep for *Phyllis dead,* for lovely Ama*ryllis dead,*
For *snowy*-shouldered *Chloe,* and for Corydon the fair;
For vines that once had *been the veil* of nymphs that lurked with*in the vale,*
Whose *precious* loves *enmesh us* in the mazes of their hair.
The pipes of Pan are *heard no more;* the lilting lyre is *stirred no more;*
The *lute* is *mute;* the *word no more* from Delphi's cave is spoken.
From now through all *eternity* we're going to have *modernity*:
A long farewell to Arcady—a welcome to Hoboken!

Incorrect Rhymes; Undesirable Rhymes.—There are several common errors in rhyming. The first consists in rhyming the same sound with itself. By our definition of rhyming, this is an error; there must be a difference in the consonantal sounds that precede the identical accented vowels. Thus the following are not rhymes, because they have an identity of the preceding consonantal sounds:

> bay, obey; bare, bear; laying, overlaying; ability, possibility, probability

Sounds almost alike, after the accented rhyming vowel, but not quite alike, do not rhyme. This is a common error, especially in the village Milton type of verse. Examples of this fault are:

> main, game; hate, shape; feed, sleet; sandwich, orange; anguish, Flatbush; silver, deliver; baker, cracker

You can find examples of incorrect rhymes in many great poets. There is a breed of critics who take especial delight in hauling up these noddings of the masters, presumably to indicate the superiority of the mental equipment of the critics. There is no need to list such failings. One wormy apple on a tree does not indicate that the tree is a failure. Nor is it the worm that makes the tree a success as a fruit-bearer. Some wit has said that rhymes are like eggs; few care for the ones that are almost good, but not quite. Slovenly rhyming is one of the sure signs of mediocrity in poetry. Learn correct rhyming first; then, if you wish to break the rule you understand, that is your privilege.

Certain incorrect rhymes have become somewhat estab-

lished by usage, due to the rhyming paucity of the language. Among these are:

given, Heaven; God, road; war, more; shadow, meadow; bliss, is; was, grass; gone, shone

There is another class of popular near-rhymes, called eye-rhymes, because they are dictated by an identity of spelling, among other reasons. Among these are:

earth, hearth; bare, are; north, forth; real, steal

These are no more rhymes than *hate* and *make;* but they are popular. The first three may be accepted, for the same reason that *given* and *heaven* are accepted; the motive behind the rhyming of *real* and *ideal* with such sounds as *steal* or *steel* is more dubious, and probably springs from a mispronunciation of the *-eal* in *real* and *ideal.* In these two words, *-eal* is two definite syllables; in *steal,* the *-eal* is one syllable. This is far more questionable in usage. Many people, including many versifiers, are tone-deaf about minor differentiations in pronunciation. This is usually curable; and, once the attention is directed toward the slouchy hearing, which results in an assumed identity of things really different, the thing usually cures itself.

Among the commonest mistakes is failing to pronounce the *r* in certain words or failing to hear it when properly pronounced. Test yourself: do these pairs of words rhyme?

fork, talk; stalking, corking

The sounds are close, but not identical; hence, they must be discarded, if perfect rhyme is your aim. Another con-

stant error is failing to differentiate vowel sounds nearly alike. Take these two words:

forth, north

They do not couple as an eye-rhyme; for rhyme is a question of sound, not of sight, and there is no such rhyme as an eye-rhyme. What is called an eye-rhyme is an identity of spelling, irrespective of pronunciation. Yet many will couple the two as identities in sound, and will argue staunchly that they are identical. What about these two—

fore, war

You can substitute for *fore* any of its rhymes, and for *war* any of its. Your ear may still hear these as identical, although they are not. We have here eliminated the terminal *-th* in the first pair of words. Now let us eliminate the terminal *-r* sound, and pair together:

foe, law

If you cannot hear the difference now between the long *o* sound and the *-aw* sound, there is something defective about your hearing. Obviously, if *o* and *aw* do not rhyme, then *ore* and *awr* (as in *war, for*) do not rhyme perfectly; nor do *-orth* and *-awrth,* as in *forth* and *north.*

A third common error of mis-identities comes from the careless wont of dropping a terminal *-g.* Take these mismated pairs:

parting, Martin; herding, burden; whiten, slighting; floating, oaten; rioting, quiet in; satin, tatting

You get a perfect rhyme, if you pronounce these *Martin, partin', satin, tattin';* and a rhyme to all intents perfect, in *herdin', burden,* for the correct pronunciation of the latter word is *ber-dn,* and the unaccented *-din'* (mispronounced for *-ding*) commonly is spoken as *-dn'*. But the *g* in *parting* should be as audible as the *g* in *god.*

There are subtler errors that many fall into, such as using as identities such sounds as *lord, gaud, broad*—close cousins in sound, which should be an added reason against mating them, in accurate rhyming. If you pronounce *dog* as *dawg,* you will rhyme it with the proper name *Haug,* and hardly with *dialog,* which rarely reappears as *dialawg.* Learn accuracy of pronunciation, and you will not err here.

Again, in double rhymes, *Norfolk* does not rhyme with *war talk,* George M. Cohan to the contrary notwithstanding. *Nor* and *war* rhyme; but there must be an identity of all the sounds after the rhymed accented vowel; and *folk* and *talk* are not identical. Similarly *byway* and *sly play, hating* and *plaything, childhood* and *wildwood* (so dear to tinpan lyricists), *seaside* and *spree tied,* do not rhyme. But *satin* and *that in* do rhyme; where the sounds are identical, the fact that one rhyme is composed of several words, or that the grouping of the sounds differs slightly, does not matter. *Quentin* and *went in* rhyme, as do *pray tin* and *hate in.* When, however, we reach such different locations of the consonants succeeding the rhyming vowels, a new principle comes in: that rhyming must give the effect of naturalness, or it furnishes an obstacle to the easy flow of your verse.

Browning is the chief offender against naturalness in rhyming, especially in some of his extravagant later work. It is natural to him to throw off a rhyming couplet like—

> The wolf, fox, bear and monkey
> By piping advice in one key,

which may be delightful as light verse, but which, by the very strain to accept the terminals as a correct rhyme, distracts our attention from what he is saying to the acrobatic way in which he is saying it. Oh, this is a minor example, from him; what is one to say of this exhibit, from *Of Pacchiarotto, and How He Worked in Distemper:*

> Long after the last of your number
> Has ceased my front-court to encumber,
> While, treading down rose and ranunculus,
> You *Tommy-make-room-for-your-uncle*-us!
> Troop, all of you man or homunculus,
> Quick march! for Xanthippe, my housemaid,
> If once on your pates she a souse made
> With what, pan or pot, bowl or *skoramis,*
> First comes to her hand—things were more amiss!
> I would not for worlds be your place in—
> Recipient of slops from the basin!

This is a witty use of rhyme; words have been forced, and at times ravished, from their natural meanings and sequences, to make a saxophone blare of sound identities. It is undoubtedly a merit in light verse, which we shall take up later; but it is out of place in serious verse and poetry, because our limited minds, in such cases, bend all their attention on the extraordinary sound athletics, and

do not perceive the sense, the burden, of the song. There is every praise, in light verse, for Byron's

> O ye lords of ladies intel*lectual,*
> Inform us truly, have they not hen*pecked you all?*

or for Barham's—

> Should it even set fire to the castle and *burn it, you're*
> Amply insured both for buildings and *furniture;*

for Browning's—

> Here we get peace and a*ghast I'm*
> Caught thinking war the true *pastime.*

But serious verse and poetry require, to the contrary, a seriousness in rhyme, which makes it in its final essence unobtrusive. In the twilight zone where the serious and the light interplay and dwell side by side in amity, or in a smouldering border warfare, your own good taste must guide you. Unobtrusive: there are poems where the rhyming is perfect, and yet where the ear for a long time does not distinguish the use of rhyme at all, so naturally it fits into the sense of the passage. Take this opening of *Pelicans Fishing:*

> Aim your beaks straight below,
> When you sight the scaled prey!
> Then let your body go
> Volplaning at the spray.

The order of words is entirely natural; the word *go* earns no excessive stress, since it occurs at the end of a carry-on line, as part of the complete verbal phrase *go volplaning;*

and *spray,* the second rhyme sound, is used naturally, and with no sense of strain or affectation. This effect, found constantly in good poetry, is ideal in many places.

Rhyme is far more potent as a shaper, in rhymed poetry, than is ordinarily dreamed of. It is a sort of czar, that dictates inflexibly something in the future—namely, the terminal sound at a definite place, which must be its fit rhyming mate. The number of such rhyming mates is limited; hence, a rhyme sound, once used, and thereby elevated to the imperial purple, ukases that the sense, as well, in the future line, must lead naturally to one of the limited number of rhyming mates. Thus rhyme is a brain-stimulant (or, if the versifier is luckier, a stimulant to the poetic imagination). The flow of a poem often develops out of the initial rhyme words which chance to terminate the early metric lines. To make sense and sound, thus serfed irretrievably, develop with that finality of natural utterance which is the charm of great poetry, is often a task which the critical side of the poet's nature must struggle over; perhaps never to achieve the desired result, perhaps to arrive at it after many a false attempt.

For, to the living poet, there is no such thing as *poetic license,* ordinarily regarded as an excuse for twisting the normal order of words into awkward inversions (compare *souse made* and *be your place in,* in the selection quoted from Browning's poem about Pacchiarotto); for using archaic, obsolescent, and obsolete words; for warping the meanings of words; and for their slovenly kith. It appears in many masters of the past; but what is demanded of the

technique of this and any subsequent age is improvement. It is not found in any of the best living poetry in America today. This is one of the dangers of the rhyme: it has an enormous tendency to drag in irrevelancies, due merely to their rhyming nature; irrelevancies of thought, as well as of expression. In proportion as you avoid such aberrations from the normal conversational usage of words will your chance of being regarded as a poet grow. Utter sincerity in speech eschews the artificial and the stilted in utterance, as the minor plague that it is.

There are certain overworked and hackneyed rhymes which it is well to avoid, unless used with a novel meaning which removes the taint of staleness from them. For rhymes grow stale, as meat does; and gamy rhymes are no ornament to a poem. Such overpopular rhymes, still prized as priceless in the lyrics of tinpan alley, the popular songs of the day, are, for instance:

> bliss, kiss; dove, love, above; desire, fire; burn, yearn; spring, wing

A pleasing effect is often obtained by rhyming words where the accent falls emphatically on one rhyming syllable, and only lightly, or hardly at all, on the other. Examples of this are:

> sing, blossoming; dress, happiness; sea, apostrophe, company; good, hardihood; pull, beautiful

Assonance.—Assonance, also called *vowel rhyme,* consists in identity of the final accented vowel sound, with dissimilarity in the subsequent consonants. It is a sort of

substitute for rhyme, once used in Provençal and Old French poetry, and still used in Spanish. George Eliot, in her *Song of Joan* in the *Spanish Gipsy,* uses this device:

> Maiden crowned with glossy *blackness,*
> Lithe as panther forest-*roaming,*
> Long-armed naead, when she *dances,*
> On the stream of ether *floating,*
> Bright, O bright Fedalma!

Here *blackness* and *dances* are used as assonantal terminals, as are *roaming* and *floating.* Typical groups of assonantal masculine endings are:

> hat, cap, tan, ram, bang, blab, stack
> hate, ape, shame, pain, male
> fed, wreck, hem, pen, met, step
> fib, did, quick, hit, miss, in, him, sting

In feminine endings, we would have such instances as:

> hoping, roaming, floating, atoning, robing, floated
> stopping, nodding, rotting, rotted, cotton
> coming, dumbness, stubborn

This is a device little used in English verse, as yet; and yet it offers a diversion from rhyme. It is obvious that there are far more assonantal sounds than there are rhyming sounds in the language. It is clear that we have here an identity, that of the rhymed and accented vowel, and also a divergence or variety, that of the consonants. The ear, trained to expect perfect rhymes, is irritated by their absence; but the ear can accustom itself to the departure, and

many subtle achievements in the use of assonance may be expected from poets of the future.

Alliteration.—Alliteration is the repetition of the same consonantal sound at the beginning of two or more words or syllables, usually the accented ones, in close or immediate succession. Anglo-Saxon poetry, a stranger to rhyme, used, instead, alliteration. Here is the opening of Langland's *Piers Plowman,* one of the last Anglo-Saxon products:

> I *sh*ope me in *sh*roudes, as I a *sh*eep were.
> In a *s*ummer *s*eason when *s*oft was the *s*un,

With or without rhyme in addition, it is still used liberally in poetry. Take this excerpt from Poe's *The Raven:*

Whether *t*empter sent, or whether *t*empest *t*ossed thee here ashore,
Desolate yet all un*d*aunted, on this *d*esert land enchanted,
On this *h*ome by *H*orror *h*aunted—tell me truly, I implore.

If this is not overused, it is highly effective. Swinburne is one of the abler practitioners in alliteration; but he has at times so saturated his verse with this device, that it becomes cloying, as in—

> The *l*ilies and *l*anguors of *v*irtue,
> The *r*oses and *r*apture of *v*ice.

Take this more concealed instance from Tennyson:

> The *s*plendor falls on castle walls,
> And *s*nowy *s*ummits old in *s*tory;
> The bright *l*ight shakes across the *l*akes,
> And the wild cataract *l*eaps in glory.

This selection also uses internal rhyme (*falls, walls; light, bright; shakes, lakes*) and assonance (*snowy, story*).

Consonance, Off Rhymes, Sour Rhymes, Analyzed Rhymes.—Another device has come increasingly into favor, due to the scarcity of rhyming sounds in the language—a device which is best described as consonance, but which has, as indicated above, a number of other names. It consists, most strictly, of identity of all consonantal sounds after the accented vowel, which normally is the rhyming vowel; and, instead of an identity in these vowels, a difference in them. Take these verses by Don Marquis, entitled *Sapphics:*

> Leaps the little river, and laughs at *fetters;*
> Through the pebbled channel it flutes and *flutters;*
> Dances down the rapids where Autumn *scatters*
> Gold on the *waters.*
>
> Something bends the sedge and the rushes *over,*
> Something moves and gleams where the grasses *waver,*—
> Can it be a nymph that has taken *cover,*
> Couched by the *river?*
>
> May it be a naiad with breasts that *glimmer,*
> Chased of satyrs, dreading their hoofed *clamor,*
> Finding strange delight in the fears that *claim her,*
> Joy in the *tremor?*

Here *fetters, flutters, scatters,* and *waters* are used as one set of cousin terminals; *over, waver, cover,* and *river,* as a second group; and *glimmer, clamor, claim her,* and *tremor* as the last.

Edna St. Vincent Millay, in her *The Poet and His Book,* which many with reason call her most effective poem, has these off-rhymed pairs:

> worry, bury; withered, gathered; cluttered, spattered;
> cupboard, upward; quarrel, laurel; hunters, winter's;
> only, homely; valleys, bellies

Two of these combinations, *cupboard, upward* and *only, homely,* have differing consonants, and are hence true assonance, since their vowels are identical. The others are in the new mood; and the exquisite lyric movement of the poem in which they are used appears from—

> Boys and girls that steal
> From the shocking laughter
> Of the old, to kneel
> By a dripping rafter,
> Under the discolored eaves,
> Out of trunks with hingeless covers
> Lifting tales of saints and lovers,
> Travelers, goblins, thieves,
>
> Suns that shine by night,
> Mountains made from valleys,—
> Bear me to the light,
> Flat upon your bellies
> By the webby window lie,
> Where the little flies are crawling—
> Read me, margin me with scrawling,
> Do not let me die!

Elinor Wylie grew, in her second volume, to such "sour rhyme" pairs as:

> woman, human (*used also by Poe*); creatures, nature's; pussy-fur, Lucifer; ovens, province; pantries, gentry's; rustics, acrostics; over, lover

all from one poem; and, elsewhere,

> bloody, body; people, ripple; mourner, corner; primer, dreamer; standard, pondered; noble, trouble; music, physic; Circe, hearsay; Vulcan, falcon; languish, distinguish

In her third volume, she has arrived at a rare use of similar masculine rhymes:

> lost, ghost; sword, lord; suns, bronze, once; wins, prince

The last two examples are true assonance, with identical vowel sounds and divergent consonants.

An American singer, W. W. Christman, who deserves to be better known, has these off ryhmes:

> hammer, amour; apple, tipple; spiral, laurel; ardent, discordant; frothing, nothing; current, torrent

Marjorie Meeker exults in such couplets as:

> mothless, deathless; garden, burden; sever, over; wharves, curves; walked, wrecked; sail, bell; gleam, limn; risen, frozen; drifter, after; angry, hungry; cynic, ironic

and many another successful pairing. And there are others who have grown recently into the same device. For suddenly it swept like a tropic rain over the world of American poetry, appearing almost simultaneously in all of the young singers who were sensitive to improvement in tech-

nique; and, more slowly, it impressed the living English poets. Its roots perhaps are in the deep modern esteem for Emily Dickinson, who, by some inner spirit of singing perverseness, seemed to regard a correct rhyme as a major sin. We find in her work such off rhymes as:

> gate, mat; one, stone; pearl, alcohol; inch, experience; warm, yestermorn; son, renown; endure, door; death, earth; unmoved, God,

and many more. There can be no complaint of paucity of possible terminal couplets, when rhyme has been broadened in this way.

We have found a liberal variety in poetic rhythms spreading through errant variations in the metric line to a combination of metres in the line, and to that wider variety called polyrhythmic verse or free verse. We have found the use of rhyme showing the same tendency, through assonance to consonance or off rhymes. The poet, the actual producer of poetry, writing in the last analysis according to the dictates of the inner musical ear, and, at best, instinctively choosing always the natural utterance instead of the unnatural, has in every direction, in the last two decades, broadened the technique of his art. As Whitman worded it, "The brawn of the brood beloved of Time is unconstraint." There must still be chains, but they are chains of the poet's own forging, not superimposed bonds. The poet, by his very nature, breaks the chains of others, and builds his own patterns. And the land's song grows the more varied and pleasing, as a result.

III The Stanza

The Stanza: the Couplet.—The arrangement of the lines of poetry into formal groups of lines is called their division into stanzas. A stanza is defined as a series of lines arranged in a fixed order of sequence as regards their length, metrical form, or rhymes, and constituting a typical group, or one of a number of similar groups, composing a poem or parts of a poem. This is involved, but comparatively clear. A *verse* in poetry, often misused as a synonym for stanza, is, properly, one *line* of poetry. The dictionary definition of stanza denies the use of the term to describe a couplet, and says that it rarely is used of a triplet. Both these statements are erroneous; the series of lines composing a stanza may be two, or three, or more, in number.

The simplest stanza is one of two lines, called a *couplet.* It may be rhymed:

> Poems are made by fools like me,
> But only God can make a tree,

or it may be unrhymed. Lines may be rhymed in couplets, and yet not be divided into couplet stanzas. The rhymed iambic five-foot couplets, so common in the ages of Dryden and Pope, are called *heroic couplets:*

> All nature is but art, unknown to thee;
> All chance, direction, which thou canst not see;
> All discord, harmony not understood;
> All partial evil, universal good;
> And, spite of pride, in erring reason's spite,
> One truth is clear, whatever is, is right.

So ends epistle one of Pope's *An Essay on Man,* in heroic couplets, exquisitely wrought in form, and with a content which the modern scientific mind finds, at best, a bit irrelevant. It will aid the aspirant in poetry to practice writing the various stanzas, as they are reached. The couplet, of course, can have any type of metric foot, and any number of feet to the line; it may be rhymed, or unrhymed, as in this opening of Sandburg's *Fog:*

> The fog comes
> on little cat feet,

and this conclusion of his *Grass:*

> I am the grass.
> Let me work.

It may constitute a complete poem, as in *Standards* by Charles Wharton Stork:

> White is the skimming gull on the somber green of the fir-trees,
> Black is the soaring gull on a snowy glimmer of cloud.

and as in *On Seeing Weather-Beaten Trees,* by Adelaide Crapsey:

> Is it as plainly in our living shown,
> By slant and twist, which way the wind hath blown?

In such cases it is a couplet, but not a stanza; for a stanza is a part of a poem, not a poem complete. Its proper stanza use occurs in these opening couplet stanzas of Sara Teasdale's *There Will Come Soft Rains:*

> There will come soft rains and the smell of the ground,
> And swallows circling with their shimmering sound;

And frogs in the pools singing at night,
And wild plum-trees in tremulous white;

Robins will wear their feathery fire
Whistling their whims on a low fence wire.

The Triplet, or Tercet.—A stanza of three lines is called a triplet, or tercet. This is not as common a form as the couplet or the four-lined stanza, the quatrain. Tennyson's *The Two Voices* contains, as a typical tercet:

A still small voice spake unto me,
"Life is so full of misery,
Were it not better not to be?"

Here the three lines rhyme together. Using the letter *a* for this rhyme sound, we describe the rhyming of this tercet as a, a, a. Lamb's *The Old Familiar Faces* is in unrhymed triplets:

I have had playmates, I have had companions
In my days of childhood, in my joyful school-days;
All, all are gone, the old familiar faces.

I have been laughing, I have been carousing,
Drinking late, sitting late, with my bosom cronies;
All, all are gone, the old familiar faces.

Lewis Morris's *At Midnight* is similar. Shelley's *Ode to the West Wind* appears, in the Cambridge edition of his works, in parts consisting each of four triplets and a concluding couplet:

Make me thy lyre, even as the forest is:
What if my leaves are falling like its own!
The tumult of thy mighty harmonies

Will take from both a deep, autumnal tone,
Sweet though in sadness. Be thou, Spirit fierce,
My spirit! Be thou me, impetuous one!

Drive my dead thoughts over the universe
Like withered leaves to quicken a new birth!
And, by the incantation of this verse,

Scatter, as from an unextinguished hearth
Ashes and sparks, my words among mankind!
Be through my lips to unawakened earth

The trumpet of a prophecy! O Wind,
If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind?

This will repay more than a second glance, being, as it is, the climax of perhaps the greatest, as it is among the most personal, of the lyric cries of one of our greatest lyricists. The rhyme scheme of these triplets, considered one at a time, is: a, b, a. That is, the first line rhymes with the third; and the second is unrhymed. It is possible to write a poem throughout in this stanza form, letting the central line in each three-lined stanza go unrhymed.

But that is not what Shelley has done. The complete scheme for the whole division of the poem is: a, b, a; b, c, b; c, d, c; d, e, d; e, e. It is a sort of chain verse, in which the rhyme of the first and third lines of any stanza after the first follows the unrhymed middle line of the preceding stanza; and in which the concluding couplet takes its rhyme sound from the central line in the last preceding triplet. It is a novel fourteen-line division, faintly redolent of the sonnet. Its technical name is *terza rima.*

Especial attention, since we have only recently departed from a study of rhyme, is called to the variations in the rhyme:

> is, harmonies; fierce, universe; birth, hearth; wind, behind

The first of these, *is, harmonies,* illustrates rhyming an accented monosyllable with the terminal syllable, only slightly accented, of a polysyllable. The second is an off rhyme, or consonance. The third is one of the long-accepted near rhymes. The fourth you may read as a perfect rhyme, by mispronouncing *wind.* Properly pronounced, the word rhymes with *thinned.* If properly pronounced here, this too is an instance of consonance.

And this, let it be emphasized, is what the masters do with the strict rules of versification.

The Quatrain.—A quatrain is a stanza or a poem of four lines. There are several familiar patterns of rhymed quatrains. The most common has only the second and fourth lines rhyming, with the first and third unrhymed:

As Robin Hood in the forest strayed, (*a*)
All under the green-wood tree, (*b*)
He was aware of a brave young man, (*c*)
As fine as fine might be. (*b*)

A rhyming quatrain almost as popular is:

Piping down the valleys wild, (*a*)
Piping songs of pleasant glee, (*b*)
On a cloud I saw a child, (*a*)
And he laughing said to me: (*b*)

the opening of Blake's *A Song of Singing.* Here the first

and third lines, ending a, a, rhyme together; as do the second and fourth, b, b. Blake's *The Tiger* is a quatrain rhymed couplet-wise:

Tiger, tiger, burning bright (*a*)
In the forests of the night, (*a*)
What immortal hand or eye (*b*)
Could frame thy fearful symmetry? (*b*)

Tennyson's *In Memoriam* is in another arrangement, and is so well known that it has given its name to a stanza rhymed a, b, b, a:

I hold it truth with one who sings (*a*)
To one clear harp in divers tones, (*b*)
That men may rise on stepping-stones (*b*)
Of their dead selves to higher things. (*a*)

Fitzgerald's masterly translation of the *Rubaiyat* of Omar Khayyam has the following rhyme scheme, a, a, b, a, with the first, second, and fourth lines rhymed together, and the third unrhymed:

I sometimes think that never blows so red (*a*)
The Rose, as where some buried Caesar bled; (*a*)
That every Hyacinth the Garden wears (*b*)
Dropt in her Lap from some once lovely Head. (*a*)

Other possible quatrain rhyme arrangements are:

a,b,a,a; a,b,c,c; a,a,b,c; a,b,b,c

In the cases given, the number of feet in the line has not been emphasized. Great variety in stanza arrangement may be obtained by unusual patterns. The first quatrain

quoted, from an old ballad, alternates four-foot and three-foot iambics. The first Blake quotation is of four four-foot trochaic lines; so is *The Tiger.* The *In Memoriam* stanza consists of four four-foot iambs; the *Rubaiyat* stanza, of four five-foot iambic lines. These types could be varied by using anapests or dactyls instead of iambs and trochees; or by having two lines of one type of foot, and the other two of another; or by any mixture of feet. The number of feet in the line may be varied in many ways. Many of the old ballads, and many later poems, are in what is called *Common Metre,* the chief hymn metre, with iambic feet numbering 4, 3, 4, 3 to the four lines. *Short Metre* is an iambic quatrain with 3, 3, 4, 3, feet to the four lines. The former corresponds to a long 7-foot iambic line; the second, to a couplet of 6 and then 7 iambic feet, so monotonously popular in the sixteenth century as *Poulter's measure.* A less usual arrangement is 4, 3, 3, 3, as in:

> Her garden is not walled and fenced
> Against the floating seeds
> Of restless things, against
> The nettles and the weeds.

Any combination of feet to the lines, such as 2, 5, 4, 3, or 4, 5, 1, 2, may be used experimentally, and may reveal a new and pleasing music.

Nor need quatrains, nor stanzas of any other number of lines, be rhymed. Walt Whitman, in an extraordinary product named *Eidolons,* uses this quatrain stanza with regularity:

I met a seer,
Passing the hues and objects of the world,
The fields of art and learning, pleasure, sense,
To glean eidolons.

This might be correctly described as iambic metre, the four unrhymed lines containing respectively two, five, five, and three feet. The number of feet to the line varies considerably throughout the different stanzas; but the general effect of the pattern, of lines short, long, long, short, remains. Again, the interpolated song of the bird in *Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking,* a marvelous polyrhythmic lyric, varies in the number of lines to the stanza; but the effect is always reined and controlled by the poet. A typical stanza is this quatrain:

Low-hanging moon!
What is that dusky spot in your brown yellow?
O is it the shape, the shape of my mate!
O moon, do not keep her from me any longer.

Five-line Stanzas; Cinquains.—There are many varieties of five-line stanzas. Tennyson uses five unrhymed iambic lines to form the stanza of the well-wrought *Tears, Idle Tears.* Adelaide Crapsey invented a formal five-lined stanza, called simply a cinquain, which contained respectively 1, 2, 3, 4, 1 feet, all iambics, as in this *Triad:*

These be
Three silent things:
The falling snow . . . the hour
Before the dawn . . . the mouth of one
Just dead.

Both of these are unrhymed. Shelley's *To a Skylark* is rhymed:

Hail to thee, blithe Spirit! (*a*)
Bird thou never wert, (*b*)
That from heaven, or near it (*a*)
Pourest thy full heart (*b*)
In profuse strains of unpremeditated art. (*b*)

His line division is four three-foot trochaic lines, followed by a six-foot iambic line, called an *Alexandrine*—a line often used at the end of a series of five-foot iambic lines. Poe, that master craftsman, used even more variation in his stanzas. Take his young love-song, *To Helen,* and you will find three five-line stanzas, rhymed thus: a, b, a, b, b; c, d, c, d, c; e, f, f, e, f. He has used, in three stanzas, three different rhyme schemes—just because the inner ear of the poet dictated that these changes were more musical than a regularity could have been.

Regarding each of Poe's stanzas independently, we would describe their rhyme schemes as a, b, a, b, b; a, b, a, b, a; a, b, b, a, b. Whole poems could be written with any of these three arrangements; or a, b, a, a, b; or in any other arrangement that pleases the versifier.

Six-line Stanza, Sextet, Sestet.—The six-line stanza is another favorite. Take this lovely Elizabethan music from W. H. Davies, in *Margery:*

The Butterfly loves Mignonette, (*a*)
And every moment deeper sips; (*b*)
When Winds do shake him by his wings, (*a*)
He fastens tighter with his lips; (*b*)

So let the whole world make me shake, (*c*)
I will not from my true love break. (*c*)

A typical stanza from Robert Burns is found in *To a Field-Mouse* and elsewhere:

Wee, sleekit, cow-rin', tim'rous beastie, (*a*)
O what a panic's in thy breastie! (*a*)
Thou need na start awa sae hasty, (*a*)
Wi' bickering brattle! (*b*)
I wad be laith to rin and chase thee (*a*)
Wi' murd'ring pattle! (*b*)

Here his feet are dominantly iambic, the pattern being 4, 4, 4, 2, 4, 2. Other favorite rhyme schemes for six-line stanzas are a, b, a, b, a, b; a, b, c, a, b, c. So-called *tail rhyme* stanza is rhymed a, a, b, c, c, b, the lines rhymed "b" being usually shorter. Whittier's *The Last Leaf* follows this design:

And if I should live to be (*a*)
The last leaf upon the tree (*a*)
In the spring, (*b*)
Let them laugh, as I do now, (*c*)
At the old, forsaken bough (*c*)
Where I cling. (*b*)

This may be used in longer stanzas, with a scheme such as: a, a, a, b, c, c, c, b. Tennyson uses a variant of this in *The Lady of Shalott:*

Willows whiten, aspens quiver, (*a*)
Little breezes dusk and shiver (*a*)
Thro' the wave that runs for ever (*a*)
By the island in the river (*a*)

Flowing down to Camelot. (*b*)
Four gray walls, and four gray towers, (*c*)
Overlook a space of flowers, (*c*)
And the silent isle imbowers (*c*)
The Lady of Shalott. (*b*)

This instance of tail rhyme stanza has nine lines, yet the plan of rhyming is merely an elaboration of that used in *The Last Leaf.*

Certain Other Stanzas.—The poets have done what they please with their stanzas; and the only way to sense this same freedom, not as a pedagogic exercise but as a living fact about poetry, is to turn your attention occasionally to the poems of your favorite poets, and observe what they have done. This should be done as a labor of love, not as an exercise in analytic mathematical poetics. There is a surface lèse-majesty, if not blasphemy, in this process of dissecting great poetry, this blurring the fine chastity of line of such a poem as Keats's *To a Nightingale* with babblings of a, a, b, b, c, c, like a stammering kindergärtner. So the botanist deliberately slashes to ribbons the orchid, the melilot, the bugloss, and stains the torso flays with caustic fluids. But, once the secret of the flower has been arrived at and chronicled, it is not needful to treat the next bloom with such devastating disrespect. And poetry comes off even better. The devices of versification in the poem under the knife are revealed by the process, as guides to tomorrow's voices; and, if the poetry be from one of the masters, the lesson learned is likely to be a further plea for liberality in the use of the poetic tools, always in the

direction of a living variety. Once the process has been ended, the poem is not dead, as the flower is; it is as fresh as ever, and technically more comprehended than before.

When we come to stanzas of seven and more feet, it would be small gain to list and describe all that have been tried. Multiples of triplets, quatrains, and cinquains, may be easily adopted from the works of others, or devised by any one. But there are certain stanzas, some of them living under their own names, which demand attention.

Among seven-lined stanzas is that one called *Rhyme Royal,* which Chaucer introduced into English prosody. It may have received its regal title from the fact that James I of Scotland used it in his *The Kinges Quhair.* Chaucer uses it repeatedly, in poems long and short:

To you, my purse, and to no other wight (*a*)
Complain I, for ye be my lady dear. (*b*)
I am full sorry now that ye be light, (*a*)
For, certes, ye now make me heavy cheer. (*b*)
Me were as lief-y laid upon a bier (*b*)
For which unto your mercy thus I cry, (*c*)
Be heavy again, or els-e mote I die. (*c*)

Another seven-lined stanza is used in *Canopus:*

The night's mysterious wings pulsed thru the dark, (*a*)
The night's mysterious noises cracked and shivered, (*b*)
And where their fingers met a visible spark (*a*)
Seemed to leap forth at them, and pulsed and quivered (*b*)
Thruout them both. Their thickened tongues were dumb, (*c*)
The pretty words of star-lore undelivered, (*b*)
The pretty words that found no breath would come. (*c*)

The advantage of this stanza is the terminal device, which avoids a rhyming couplet at its end. For this reason Gamaliel Bradford has called it one of the best stanzas for narrative verse ever invented. The same terminal device, avoiding the inevitable pause caused by couplet rhyming, might be used in longer stanzas.

Ottava Rima is an Italian stanza adopted by many poets in English. It is an eight-line stanza, formed of a sestet rhymed alternately, and of a concluding rhymed couplet. The Italians used their heroic metre, of eleven syllables to the line; in English, the line is iambic five-foot. Spenser, Milton, Keats used it, and Byron adopted it extensively, especially for the vast sprawl of *Don Juan.* Here is one of its more serious stanzas:

But "why then publish?"—There are no rewards (*a*)
Of fame or profit when the world grows weary. (*b*)
I ask in turn,—Why do you play at cards? (*a*)
Why drink? Why read?—To make some hour less dreary. (*b*)
It occupies me to turn back regards (*a*)
On what I've seen or pondered, sad or cheery; (*b*)
And what I write I cast upon the stream (*c*)
To sink or swim—I have had at least my dream. (*c*)

The *Spenserian Stanza* was invented by Edmund Spenser, and has long been a favorite in dignified verse. Its conclusion uses an alexandrine, or six-foot iambic, to break the monotony of the five-foot lines. Eight five-foot lines, concluded by a six-foot one, and the rhyming is as indicated in this opening of Keat's *The Eve of St Agnes:*

St. Agnes' Eve—ah, bitter cold it was! (*a*)

The hare limped trembling through the frozen grass, (*a*)
And silent was the flock in woolly fold. (*b*)
Numb were the Beadsman's fingers while he told (*b*)
His rosary, and while his frosted breath, (*c*)
Like pious incense from a censer old, (*b*)
Seemed taking flight for heaven without a death, (*c*)
Past the sweet Virgin's picture, while his prayer he saith. (*c*)

Spenser sustained this metre for 3,848 stanzas in one poem. The ostrich is larger than the nightingale, but the song of the latter is nevertheless preferred.

Terza Rima is an iambic rhythm, usually of five feet to the line, also derived from the Italian. It is usually written continuously, and not in stanzas. It consists of groups of three lines, each group, treated alone, rhyming a, b, a; but the rhyming sound of the middle line, *b,* becomes the *a* of the next triplet. The end of the canto or poem is a couplet, tieing up the rhyme sound terminating the central line of the triplet proceeding. Thus this is a sort of chain verse, its rhymes proceeding: a, b, a; b, c, b; c, d, c; e, d, e; f, e, f . . . y, z, y; z, z. Shelley's *Ode to the West Wind* is written in terza rima, although he preferred to have his triplets set up as separate stanzas, as we have seen.

The stanza arrangements of the four great odes of Keats are worthy of study. *To a Nightingale* has a stanza of ten lines, iambic, all of them five-foot lines except the eighth, which has three feet. Its rhyme scheme is uniform throughout the ode:

Thou wast not born for death, immortal Bird! (*a*)
No hungry generations tread thee down; (*b*)
The voice I hear this passing night was heard (*a*)

In ancient days by emperor and clown: (*b*)
Perhaps the self-same song that found a path (*c*)
Through the sad heart of Ruth, when, sick for home, (*d*)
She stood in tears amid the alien corn; (*e*)
The same that oft-times hath (*c*)
Charmed magic casements, opening on the foam (*d*)
Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn. (*e*)

On Melancholy has a stanza of five-foot iambic lines, ten in number, rhymed as in the nightingale poem in the first two stanzas, and slightly differing in the third, where the rhyme is: a, b, a, b, c, d, e, d, c, e. The three magnificent stanzas *To Autumn* employ eleven lines to the stanza, each line consisting of five iambic feet, and two stanzas rhymed slightly differently: a, b, a, b, c, d, e, d, c, c, e; a, b, a, b, c, d, e, c, d, d, e; a, b, a, b, c, d, e, c, d, d, e. *On a Grecian Urn* has ten five-foot iambic lines to the stanza, with three slightly different patterns for the last six lines, after the identical a, b, a, b opening of each stanza; namely, c, d, e, d, c, e; c, d, e, c, e, d; and c, d, e, c, d, e.

The stanza quoted from *To a Nightingale* may have come first of all to the poet: for it is the climax of the whole, and it often happens, when inspiration is driving most sternly, that the poet is plagued most by the internally shaped climax lines, and puts them to paper first. Often the last line of a poem comes first; and, perhaps just as often, the whole product is written from line one to the end, although the end may at times have been seen from the beginning. But there are eight of these tremendous stanzas in this poem, with a rigid pattern; and it is almost

impossible that any poet could maintain an equally high flight in so formal a rhyme and rhythm scheme for such a stretch. Keats tends, as we have seen, toward a dominant regularity throughout; other poets use their patterns more flexibly. Poe was strictly regular in *The Raven;* but in higher flights of poetry, as in *To Helen, The Conqueror Worm, The Haunted Palace,* and *To One in Paradise,* the scheme alters with the progression of the poem. In *The Conqueror Worm,* for instance, employing an eight-lined stanza rhymed alternately (a, b, a, b, c, d, c, d) the number of feet to the line vary. Stanza one has 3, 4, 4, 4; 4, 3, 4, 3. Stanza two has 4, 3, 3, 4; 4, 4, 4, 2. The last stanza has eight lines of three feet each; and eighteen of the feet are anapests, to only six two-syllabled feet. *The Haunted Palace* plays above and below an eight-line pattern, with subtle modifications in the composition of the lines; and here is the progression of *To One in Paradise:*

Thou wast that all to me, love,
  For which my soul did pine—
A green isle in the sea, love,
  A fountain and a shrine,
All wreathed with fairy fruits and flowers,
  And all the flowers were mine.

Ah, dream too bright to last!
  Ah, starry Hope! that didst arise
But to be overcast!
  A voice from out the Future cries,
"On! on!"—but o'er the Past,
  (Dim gulf!) my spirit hovering lies
Mute, motionless, aghast!

For, alas! alas! with me
  The light of Life is o'er.
  "No more—no more—no more!——"
(Such language holds the solemn sea
  To the sands upon the shore)
Shall bloom the thunder-blasted tree,
  Or the stricken eagle soar!

And all my days are trances,
  And all my nightly dreams
Are where thy dark eye glances,
  And where thy footstep gleams—
In what ethereal dances,
  By what eternal streams.

The opening and closing six-line stanzas are not quite uniform; the central seven-line stanzas differ in structure from one another. It is so that actual poetry comes, when the masters write it.

Elegiac verse, based upon classic models, is described in the prosodies as lines alternately dactylic hexameter and dactylic pentameter; and then this is explained away by saying that the shorter lines have six accents, but omit the unaccented syllables in the third and sixth feet. Ideally done, it would follow this paraphrase of Coleridge in his *Translation from Schiller:*

In the hexameter rises the fountain's all-silvery radiance;
In the pentameter aye falling in melody back.

Coleridge, in his translation, misses the exact rhythm. Used at great length, it grows extremely monotonous; and it is

noteworthy that none of the five best known elegiac poems (poems dealing with death, of an individual or generally) in English metric verse, use this metre. The five poems referred to are Milton's *Lycidas,* Shelley's *Adonais,* Tennyson's *In Memoriam,* Gray's elegy, and Whitman's tribute to Lincoln.

The sonnet has been used many times as a stanza; but it is best to treat it as a separate poem; for it appears most frequently so. Its stanza use grows naturally out of the technique of it, treated as an individual poem.

In polyrhythmic verse or free verse, the stanza division follows the poet's inner dictation of the logical place where the group of lines should end, with a space separating it from the next group. No rules may be laid down for this; the meaning, and the inner music, dictate the proper stanza division.

Classic Forms.—The classic Greek *dactylic hexameter,* used in heroic poetry, consisted of six feet, the first four either dactyls or spondees, the fifth a dactyl (if it occurred as a spondee, it was called a spondaic verse), and the last a spondee or a trochee. This can be written in English, with an accent basis instead of a basis of long and short syllables; but the effect is artificial, in most instances. Poe had his fun with the form, taking a side dig at academic critics:

D́o té́ll | wh́en m̆ay w̆e | hó́pe t̆o m̆ake | mén ŏf sen̆se | oút ŏf

th̆e | Ṕundit̆s, |

Bŏrn ănd brŏught | ŭp wĭth thĕir | snŏuts dĕep | dŏwn ĭn thĕ | mŭd

ŏf thĕ | Frŏg-pŏnd? |

Why ăsk? | Who ĕvĕr | yĕt săw | mŏnĕy măde | ŏut ŏf ă | făt ŏld |

Jĕw, ŏr | dŏwnrĭght | ŭprĭght | nŭtmĕgs | ŏut ŏf ă | pĭne-knŏt? |

He has here the classic spondee predominance; but the result is neither poetry nor classic.

Hendecasyllabics were 11-syllabled lines composed of a spondee, a dactyl, and three trochees. Tennyson lightly composed these *Hendecasyllabics:*

> Ó yŏu | chŏrŭs ŏf | ĭndŏ- | lĕnt rĕ- | viĕwĕrs, |
> Irresponsible, indolent reviewers,
> Look, I come to the test, a tiny poem,
> All composed in a meter of Catullus;
> All in quantity, careful of my motion,
> Like the skater on ice that hardly bears him,
> Lest I fall unawares before the people,
> Waking laughter in indolent reviewers.

Alcaics, named from the lyric poet Alcaeus, are of several kinds. In one, the line is made up of five feet, a spondee or iamb, an iamb, a long syllable, and two dactyls. Another variety has two dactyls and two trochees to the line. Beside these dactylic Alcaics, the style simply called Alcaic consists—and now we have you!—of an *epitrite,* two *choriambi,* and a *bacchius.* Do you wonder, after this explanation, that we are somewhat in despair at the gram-

matical prosodists, who have baptized helpless feet with such terrible pagan names? An *epitrite* consists of three long syllables and one short; it is called a first, second, third, or fourth epitrite, depending upon the location of the short syllable. A *choriamb* or choriambus is a foot of four syllables, thus: long, short, short, long, with the stress on either the first or the fourth syllable. A *bacchius* was composed of one short syllable followed by two longs, with the stress on the first long syllable. Such syllables are as much at home in English verse as a louse on a lady's bonnet at church; but, unlike the louse, they have had no Scottish laureate to grave them into deathlessness.

The Alcaic ode is composed of several strophes, each consisting of four lines, the first two of which are always eleven-syllable Alcaics of the first kind, the third an especial form of iambic dimeter of nine syllables, and the fourth a ten-syllabled Alcaic of the second kind. Tennyson caught something of it in this:

> O mighty-mouthed inventor of harmonies,
> O skilled to sing of time or eternity,
> God-gifted organ-voice of England,
> Milton, a name to resound for ages.

Sapphics are named after the poet Sappho, who is said to have used the form with high skill. A sapphic line consisted of five equal beats, its central one of three syllables, and the rest of two each. The original Greek sapphic stanza consisted of three of these lines, followed by a shorter line called an *adonic,* and followed this pattern:

– ⏑ | – ⏑ | – ⏑ ⏑ | – ⏑ | – ⏑
– ⏑ | – ⏑ | – ⏑ ⏑ | – ⏑ | – ⏑
– ⏑ | – ⏑ | – ⏑ ⏑ | – ⏑ | – ⏑
– ⏑ ⏑ | – ⏑

Campion, Cowper, and Swinburne have written with some success in the metre, and others with less glory. In the scansion scheme given, the sign (–) signifies a long syllable, and the sign (⏑) a short one. The form can be seen in these lines of Swinburne:

Saw the | white im- | placable | Aphro- | dite, |

Saw the | hair un- | bound and the | feet un- | sandalled |

Shine as | fire of | sunset on | western | waters; |

Saw the re- | luctant |

Feet, the straining plumes of the doves that drew her,
Looking, always looking with necks reverted,
Back to Lesbos, back to the hills whereunder
Shone Mitylene;

Heard the flying feet of the Loves behind her
Make a sudden thunder upon the waters,
As the thunder flung from the strong unclosing
Wings of a great wind.

So the goddess fled from her place, with awful
Sound of feet and thunder of wings around her:
While behind a clamor of singing women
Severed the twilight.

In the second and fifth foot of the first two of these lines, and in the fifth foot of the third, either a spondee or a trochee may be used, as the scansion scheme indicates. Exercises in such feet are advanced metrical work. The danger in them is that the product, if it satisfies the technical requirements (making allowance for the fact that the modern poet must re-familiarize himself with the Greek conception of long and short syllables, a very intricate subject; and that the English ear does not normally hear length in syllables, but does hear accent) may be mistaken by the poet for a poem, instead of merely skilled verses.

A choriamb we have found to be four syllables, in the sequence long, short, short, long. A *choriambic line* consists of a spondee, three choriambi, and an iamb. A *galliambic line* is composed of iambs, one of which drops its final syllable—so the Greek prosodists taught; the next to the last foot being an anapest. All of these may be used in lyric verse, if the versifier takes out suitable insurance in advance against mediocrity and prosiness.

Indentation.—Indentation of lines in poetry consists in setting in certain lines, by throwing or sinking them inward by a blank space in the margin. Every paragraph in prose is indented; and an early use of indentation in poetry was to indent only the opening line of every stanza. The more logical method is either to avoid all indentation, except in long stretches of blank verse or rhymed couplets, where the opening line of each stanza (corresponding to

a prose paragraph) may be indented; or to use indentation to emphasize the lines which rhyme together. Thus this is erroneous indentation:

She was a phantom of delight
  When first she gleamed upon my sight;
A lovely apparition, sent
  To be a moment's ornament.

There is no logical reason for this indenting; and it comes from an inept author's or poet's idea that alternate lines in verse should be indented. These four lines need no indentation, since they are couplet-rhymed. If the order of the lines had been different, indentation would have been proper:

She was a phantom of delight,
  A lovely apparition, sent,
When first she gleamed upon my sight,
  To be a moment's ornament.

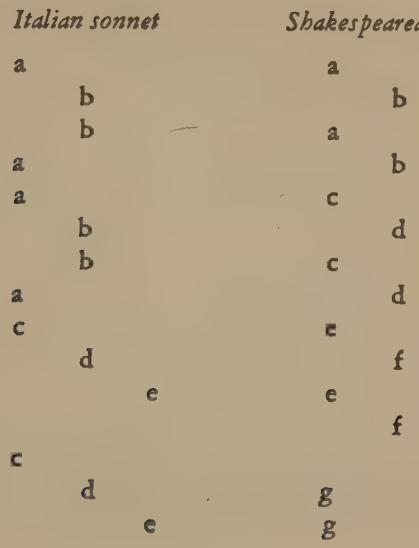
This is correctly indented, since it rhymes alternately:

I fear thy kisses, gentle maiden;
  Thou needest not fear mine;
My spirit is to deeply laden
  Ever to burthen thine.

As a matter of fact, Shelley or his printer set this up without indentation; and that form too is unobjectionable.

The indentation of the sonnet furnishes much difficulty to poets and printers alike. The following two methods are acceptable, for the Italian and the Shakespearean son-

nets. Here the letters indicating the rhymes are given, and not the full lines; and the indentation follows the rhyme.



Or it is equally permissible to set sonnets up without indentation. The usual method of indenting the Shakespearean sonnet differs from any of these methods; and consists in setting up the first twelve lines without indentation, and indenting only the concluding couplet.

IV The Vocabulary of Poetry

Choice of Words.—Poetry and prose are expressed alike in words; and, in the usage of the best poets, and in that of the best prose writers, like words appear. There is no word which does not find its appropriate home in poetry.

Slang may find its place, as in the better work of Sandburg, John V. A. Weaver, and a host of others. Tabooed or censored words are visitors glanced at askance in both forms of expression; but they may find a niche in either. Scientific words, even those of the latest coining, earn a place in either; archaic words find a place in both, a bit jeered at for their quaint garb, but worthy of inclusion if the past is speaking. The only test is, that the words be living; and any word can be used in a living manner, whether it be an adult word, a mere fledgling, or a resurrected mummy of speech.

Just as any word may be used in a dead manner.

The outworn plea of *poetic license* is used by many minor poets, and a few better ones, to excuse all sorts of unnecessary liberties which they take with the language, such as unusual ellipses or omissions of words and parts of words; archaic and obsolete language; and words in an unusual inverted order. These verbal tricks still stand today, in the eyes of many, as the sterling marks on poetry, the trade-words that identify it. Misled by teachers who urged them to keep their eyes on the great poetry of the past, their eyes were struck, in Shakespeare, Milton, Keats, and other still living giants, by the odd and unusual words, especially by those which have passed out of the living vocabulary: by *welkin, athwart, hast, didst, thou, thee, ye,* as well as by such saccharine poeticisms as *impearled, auroral, boreal, asphodelic, amaranthine, Icarian, jovial,* and their kith. Go again to the masters, and see what a small place such words have in their work.

Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow,
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day
To the last syllable of recorded time,
And all our yesterdays have lighted fools
The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle!
Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage
And then is heard no more; it is a tale
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
Signifying nothing.

When I consider how my light is spent
Ere half my days, in this dark world and wide,
And that one talent which is death to hide
Lodged with me useless, though my soul more bent
To serve therewith my Maker, and present
My true account, lest he returning chide,—
Doth God exact day-labour, light denied? . . .
They also serve who only stand and wait.

We are such forest-trees, and our fair boughs
Have bred forth, not pale solitary doves,
But eagles golden-feathered, who do tower
Above us in their beauty, and must reign
In right thereof; for 'tis the eternal law
That first in beauty shall be first in might.

Shakespeare, Milton, Keats . . . the first of these three passages written three and a quarter centuries ago; the second three hundred years ago; the third more than a century past. The oldest of the three passages is the most modern and living in word-usage, without one word or phrase which is out of our living speech today. The second

contains *ere, doth,* and the omission of an *it* in the third line and an *is* in the fourth; the third is marred, from the standpoint of modern usage, only by the needlessly emphatic *do tower,* where *tower* would have sufficed, and the use of *'tis.* This has always been the tradition of great poetry. Milton and Keats are more bookish than Shakespeare was; and bookishness is no halo in a poet. Yet the selections from Milton and Keats are comparatively blameless in this regard. To the extreme contrary, the opening sonnet of the last volume by George Sterling, a poet dead within our immediate memory, contains these word usages: *thy, thy, for a space, lest, thine, ere, of all my worship leave no trace, this my heart, thy, thee, against thy snows be set, seraph.* The modern poet uses a dead speech; Shakespeare wrote a living one, and one which still lives completely. Dip a little further into Sterling's *Sonnets to Craig,* and you find:

> guerdon, elysian hair, dross before thy magic gold, wandereth, lureth, saith, art crueller, nectar of thy bliss, love's gage, ministrant to doom, be found the rose, thy mystic beam, thou dost take, for when 'tis night, 'mid desert sands, a sweet amaze, aught in Paradise, Aye! thou, thy beatific grace, amain, elysian dew, And found them autumn's tawny seeds a few, thou settest, Lo! the abyss, thy like, thy beauty, thine image, thy soul, thy lure, mine art's,

and this acceptable line,

> I did not know that love could be like this!

It couldn't, old nectarine! That is, unless it was as dead

as Khufu's mummy, and endlessly swaddled in cerecloths of dead pronouns, dead verb forms, stale poetling echoes, expired interjections, wrenched inversions, and worse word corpses.

This is, alas, no onslaught against one writer, but a blanket indictment against a whole Noah's ark of misguided and misled versifiers. I had an aspiring friend in the Yale Law School who made *misled* rhyme with *gristled,* and who spoke of *lit-i-a-choor.* He was luckier, I think, than those who seek to masquerade in the fallen mantle of Shakespeare, Keats, and Milton, by using their infrequent unliving words as the major ornament of verse. This is the way not to write. It would have been wrong in Shakespeare's day: look at his living speech, if you doubt it. It is incredibly wrong today.

Three years after Shakespeare's year of birth Thomas Campion was born—and we find his song proceeding,

> Follow thy fair sun, unhappy shadow!
> Though thou be black as night,
> And she made all of light,
> Yet follow thy fair sun, unhappy shadow! . . .
>
> Follow still, since so thy fate ordained!
> The sun must have his shade,
> Till both at once do fade,
> The sun still proved, the shadow still disdained.

We have more of the archaic in this speech; but we feel to our marrow that this was the normal speech of the time, and that the poet has not warped the living language of his dead, in some cemeteried direction. Certain words used

here have altered their meaning by the slow weathering of time: *still* (in the sense of "always") has lost power; *proved* does not now mean *approved,* as it seems to mean here; and we do not pronounce the terminal *-ed,* as his generation clearly did. But the verse lives; as the verse of Sterling and his thousand unfortunate living brethren and sistren does not. An excessively belated Elizabethan, the living American, Rose O'Neill, sings in a strain faintly redolent of the Elizabethan lutanists; but her poetry lives, for this is somehow her living language.

> The Sonnet begs me like a bridegroom, "Come within."
> "This palace! Not for me, the desert-born!"
> I turn me, as from some too lordly sin,
> And like a singing Hagar, pause and pass—
> To lift for night's sweet thieves my houseless horn
> In broken rhythms of the windy grass. . . .
>
> Give me an old poet, not these young,
> Crying, crying, with a hurt in the tongue,
> This much of pretty words. . . .
> Give me an old poet, thick with scars,
> Quit with babbling of the stars
> And of disasters more or less,
> Who chirps with bitter pleasantness. . . .
> Wine-coloured as a stricken leaf,
> And Sybarite of grief;
> The soundless laugh in the Alas,
> The old last cricket in the grass.

There is little enough of the antique in this style; and that little is natural and, to some ears at least, inevitable.

What a contrast to the type of manufactured archaistic verse:

> The daedal earth hath oped its eyne;
> And Sol 'gins loose his shapen boon;
> The Spring's rathe zephyr the woodbine
> Fragrance doth spread with silvern shoon.

So versifiers once wrote—so versifiers still write, in the delusion that this overuse of the forsaken words means poetry. It does not; it never did.

The best poetic language is the most straightforward. Great poetry is almost invariably written in the living language of the poet's day. Of course, there are as many living languages as there are living poets. Your vocabulary may differ greatly from your wife's or your neighbor's, whether he live on the floor below or in Zanzibar. Just as, in your sincerity, you use your own vision, so will you draw from your own vocabulary—your living vocabulary—the words in which you clothe the vision. There are, of course, different strata of living vocabularies, all lying above the dead scuff of language. There are various stages of bookish vocabularies; for the rhythms, phrases, and indeed many of the words of written English prose differ as a whole from the general rhythms, phrases, and words of spoken English. Robert Frost had a speech of his own, a cultured man's selection from the conversational pithiness of the speech of the New England farmer, with many of the farm idioms and words retained in full vigor, and others softened by his selective alteration. Robinson is far

more bookish; and yet his speech may live and pulse, as in—

> The man who had made other men
> As ordinary as arithmetic. . . .
>
> I'll bet the king had warts or carbuncles,
> Or something wrong in his divine insides,
> To make him wish that Adam had died young. . . .
>
> I'll have to tell you, brother Bedivere,
> That crowns and orders, and high palaces, . . .
> Will not go rolling down to hell just yet
> Because a pretty woman is a fool.

Contrast with this colloquialism the ampler lift of:

> Where summer now lay buried, and the first
> Red leaves of autumn, flying silently,
> Became a scattered silence on the grass.

And note the bookishness of lines like

> Born with a face
> That on a bullfrog would ensure for life
> The lucubrations of a celibate. . . .
>
> Less to remembering an obscure monition
> Than to confessing an assured renascence.

This is Robinson's own self speaking, however; it pleases in a remote lexicographic way, though never with the more intimate emotion given by Frost's slightly sublimated colloquialisms:

> The trial by market everything must come to. . . .

The having anything to sell is what
Is the disgrace in man or state or nation. . . .

The melancholy of having to count souls
Where they grow fewer and fewer every year
Is extreme where they shrink to none at all.

Even his lyric utterance neighbors the colloquial, as in *The Sound of the Trees:*

They are that that talks of going
But never gets away;
And that talks no less for knowing,
As it grows wiser and older,
That now it means to stay.
My feet tug at the floor
And my head sways to my shoulder
Sometimes when I watch trees sway.

Even slang may have its place, as in this line:

So I do still, by these pickers and stealers;

for Shakespeare, as in this line given to Hamlet, did not avoid the freshest of folk-speech; and as in these lines,

Play it across the table.
What if we steal this city blind?
If they want anything let 'em nail it down,

and all the rest of Sandburg's effective *Cahoots,* as well as in other places. For slang is alive, even if it be short-lived; and, while it has breath, it may voice the poet's word.

One of the best discussions of vocabulary in poetry is

found in the chapter on that subject in John Livingston Lowes's *Convention and Revolt in Poetry.* One of his summarizations is:

> The very greatest effects of poetry are often produced without the use of a single word which might not be employed in ordinary speech.

He takes up, one by one, and justifies the usage in poetry, at a high emotional pitch, of such words as *intrinsicate, vitreous, scratch, essence, difference, inundation,* and other words ordinarily held as prosy. And he proceeds to justify also the more bookish vocabulary, the sonorous grand style that can produce a line like—

> The multitudinous seas incarnadine,

even though Shakespeare was wise enough to gloss or define this in his next line,

> Making the green—one red.

Poetry lies in the roll of the resounding polysyllables; but, to many, it lies more in the utter exquisite simplicity of such a line as the tenth in Keats's *Hyperion:*

> But where the dead leaf fell, there did it rest.

Over and over again the use of the definite monosyllabic style has justified itself, often with a predominant Anglo-Saxon origin for the words. For much of the marrow in these words is still unsapped by time: they gnarl their burly strength, oak-like, in the midst of the classic polysyllables, and flaunt storm and calm, heat and cold, alike.

Gray once wrote:

The language of the age is never the language of poetry. . . . Our poetry . . . has a language peculiar to itself.

Wordsworth believed this, when he preluded his *The Force of Prayer* with the horrific double archaism:

What is good for a bootless bene?

Mary Lamb, when her brother Charles read this opening line, flashed back, "A shoeless pea," and punned the absurd line into immortality. It is true that Wordsworth proceeded to define his own obscurity:

And their meaning is, whence can comfort spring
When Prayer is of no avail?

But the damage has been done, and the definition does no more than disinfect the lingual corpse. No, Gray is wrong; the language of the age is the language of poetry; or rather, the languages of the age. Even the scientific terminologies; although, since many of the terms are unfamiliar, they are less generally acceptable. Yet Langdon Smith, in *Evolution,* ran the gamut of the geologic ages in verse that at once achieved the popularity it courted, with its brisk folk rhythm and its universal theme appeal:

When you were a tadpole and I was a fish,
In the Paleozoic time,
And side by side on the ebbing tide
We sprawled through the ooze and slime,
Or skittered with many a caudal flip
Through the depths of the Cambrian fen,
My heart was rife with the joy of life,
For I loved you even then.

Kipling, in *The Sons of Mary and Martha,* has used the terms of a modern mechanical age with devastating effectiveness. He is speaking of those outside the leisure class as Martha's sons:

It is their care, in all the ages, to take the buffet and cushion the shock;
It is their care that the gear engages; it is their care that the switches lock;
It is their care that the wheels run truly; it is their care to embark and entrain,
Tally, transport, and deliver duly the sons of Mary by land and main.

They finger Death at their glove's end, when they piece and repiece the living wires;
He rears against the gates they tend; they feed him, hungry, behind their fires.
Early at dawn, ere men see clear, they stumble into his terrible stall,
And hale him forth like a haltered steer, and goad him and turn him till evenfall.

So it continues, clear to the bitingly ironic end:

And the sons of Mary smile and are blessed—for they know that the angels are on their side.
They know that in them is the grace confessed, and for them are the mercies multiplied.
They sit at the Feet and they hear the Word—they know how truly the Promise runs;
They have laid their burden upon the Lord, and—the Lord, He lays it on Martha's sons.

In a memorandum concerning the writing of *Leaves of Grass,* Whitman wrote:

I had great trouble in leaving out the stock "poetical" touches, but succeeded at last.

Even this great plain-spoken master slipped back, in his later years, to such poeticisms as—

'mid, unrecked, know I, yield we, ye valleys grand;

but in the main he is singularly free from this flaw. Let his constant attempt be your achievement. Go over and over your own work, to make sure that no hackneyed poeticisms, no echoes of the work of other poets, mar your product. Your vocabulary may include any word in the language that is a live word. If you choose an offensive word, or an ugly word, taken by itself, this may alienate certain readers; but the choice is yours. The proper use will lift any ugly word to beauty. Unless your speech rings with the rich inevitability of a direct spoken utterance, your sincerity will properly be doubted. Speak your own word with your own living tongue.

Tone-color.—After having dealt with alliteration, assonance, consonance, and rhyme, there is not much left to be said in that large field which prosodists ordinarily label tone-color, and which includes in general an anaylsis of the subtle beauties of verse. You may choose any word that phrases your meaning, you have learned; but, in addition to meaning, the inner musical ear of the poet will dictate the use of certain words rather than others; until, in the highest instances, the poets furnish brief stretches of poetry which are unforgettable. An analysis of the innate charm in such word usages is impossible, since the deciding force,

the sense of pleasure in the auditor or reader, in itself is so complicated in its activity, and so liable to be unique in its functioning. Our choice of favorite lines in poetry is largely irrational; that is, it is not a matter for the reason to control. The reason may study the product chosen, but only rarely can it arrive at any ultimate phrasing of the reasons for the choice.

For instance, there is the matter of *phonetic syzygy.* Sidney Lanier, in his study of English verse, calls the term a happy one; and I am glad that it has made at least one person happy. It makes me distinctly unhappy; perhaps a few more x's and y's scattered throughout it would render it more acceptable. Its meaning involves an extension of alliteration, in that it deals with groups of consonants, who possess a family kinship: as the dentals, *d, t, th,* and *Th* (as in do, to, this, though); the gutturals, *g, c* (hard), and *k;* the labials, *p, b, f, v;* the nasals *m, n, ng.* There is a similar kinship of vowel sounds. I have read long analyses of the opening stanza, for instance, of Gray's elegy, pointing out that the consonants are largely *r, t, l,* and *d,* and the vowels predominantly long *o* and long *e.* But such microscopic examination fails of its purpose, except perhaps in the case of a class of would-be critics in poetry, rather than a class of versifiers. The poet either has the ear for such inner music, or he lacks it. If he has it, he will produce lines as memorably musical as—

> The moan of doves in immemorial elms
> And murmuring of innumerable bees. . . .

Or this line featuring *onomatopoeia,* that language device

in which the words reproduce the sound they are intended to convey—

With lisp of leaves and ripple of rain.

To the extreme contrary is what Baum has called the correspondence of a harsh line and a harsh thought, in Browning's famous:

Irks care the crop-full bird, frets doubt the maw-crammed beast?

No matter how such a line may be packed with sizzling syzygy, it fails, to me, as poetry; it does not ring in my ears as song. Pope, a master craftsman, showed how words could modulate themselves to meaning in this celebrated portion of his *Essay on Criticism:*

When Ajax strives some rock's vast weight to throw,
The line too labours, and the words move slow;
Not so, when swift Camilla scours the plain,
Flies o'er th' unbending corn, and skims along the main.

This is clever, and a bit prettified. Tennyson, a meticulous craftsman, never permitted a terminal *-s* sound in one word to be followed by an initial *s* in another; he protested that his line was not, as often quoted,

And freedom broadens slowly down,

but was,

And freedom slowly broadens down.

Well enough; but Shakespeare did not hesitate to write,

The multitudinous seas incarnadine. . . .
I am thy father's spirit.

and similar lines. Any device, if overused, cloys; if used naturally, in the fit place, it is a true ornament.

A Poem Criticised.—The practical application of this long discussion of rhythm, rhyme, stanza, and vocabulary, is what interests you; and perhaps it can be seen best in a versifier's self-criticism of his own product. Since I lack access to the manuscripts of other living poets, I must perforce choose one of my own poems, to show how the lines are whittled, by the writer's own critical sense, toward what he desires his lines to be. When *Winter Laughter* was written, on January 20th of 1924, I had disciplined myself in advance to use a living vocabulary, an absence of echoes of the work of others, a logical rhyme usage, and an inevitable rhythm. I possess only the second version of the poem, and the final version; but the difference between these may aid in clarifying some of the principles already stated.

This second version of the poem proceeded:

All winter long I've seen the grass,
Green, under choking ice and snow,
Frozen brittle as brittle glass,
Right down the path where people pass.

All of the torture the gray winds blow
Hardly draws from the grass one stain;
Its heart is green and bright below,
And what comes after ice, I know,

It is what it remembers very plain;
And out of the cold its green leaves spill

A sound brighter than hail or rain,
A sound of hope, a pledge of gain,

And laughter—almost rocking the hill,
Laughter as harsh as clanging brass,
Great ribald laughter at the chill,
Gaily, scornfully confident still.

And in that hour when troubles mass
Over me, chiller than bleak snow,
I've laughed myself, just like the grass,
Right down the path where people pass.

I can remember the inception of the poem, in the repeated daily sight of the green grass under the trodden cloudy-glassy covering of snow turned to ice by some impertinent December thaw; and in the not unexpected application of it, as a simile of the poet, frozen under the world's inert disdain, and trodden under foot by more immediate demands, chiefly of bill collectors. The theme was personal, and, in writing it, the writer expected much from it; and he was vastly disappointed in the product as given above. He set about improving it. The rhyme scheme is not easy —a sort of chain verse, a, b, a, a; b, c, b, b; c, d, c, c, and so on. This calls for four lines ending in each rhyme after the first; and the poet bound himself further to observe the rules of rhyming found under the French forms, and not to repeat any rhyming word, except when the last stanza comes back to the rhymes of the first.

This had been the rhyming scheme, and it had corrupted the normal straightforward utterance of the writer. In the

final draft, only six of these twenty lines remained unaltered. Let us take it up stanza by stanza.

The first line satisfied. The second had a break where *choking* came in: a break perhaps justified by the poet's image, but here introduced too early to be effective. It made the line too muscled, too striving. *Choking* was altered to *the,* and the thing was done. The third line repeated *brittle,* with no good reason, and after consideration reappeared as:

Frozen stiff and brittle as glass.

The syzygic connection between *f, f* and *b* did not occur to the poet, and in all probability he was ignorant of it. But, as rewritten, the line sounds stiff and brittle; and that was the effect desired. The fourth line was left unaltered.

Stanza two was far less successful. The first line, with *torture,* was again over-muscled, exaggerated: in his calmer critical moment, it seemed doubtful if others could share in the wind's blowing as torture. The second line in the stanza was illogical, since surely the poet did not mean that anything drew a stain from the grass. If this was meant, if the intention was that the ice was stained green, it was a poor intention, and was discarded. The point at issue was that the grass was not stained brown by the pressure. The third line was too usual, too sweet and pretty, for the context. So first the poet lined out *torture,* and wrote over it this succession of words:

sting, lashing, grief, fret, hurt, scourge, gall, curse

One by one these were overlined. *Hard,* substituted for

gray in the description of the wind, was also excised. Then the whole three opening lines of the stanza were scratched out, and rewritten as they appear below in the final version.

Stanza three had its first line altered, its second line altered in the opening movement, its fourth line knocked out entirely—a dreadful, uninspired line that, as first written!—and a new line substituted, and inserted between lines two and three.

Stanza four opened with a line containing the weak qualifying word *almost,* which was of no advantage here. The word went out, and a new phrase opened it. Line two gave much trouble. The repetition of *laughter* went out at once; and then, as a second adjective to qualify *brass,* these were pencilled on the margin:

battering, hammering, clashing

Instead of any of these, *clamoring* was decided on—who can doubt, but for its alliteration with *clanging,* and its subtle music of a trisyllable following a dissyllable—

Clanging, clamoring brass

The music is good. "Great ribald laughter" did not please;

Bright scornful laughter

took its place, with *against* substituted for *at,* in the rest of the line. The fourth line had read,

Gaily, scornfully confident still

The *scornful* had now been taken up to the third line; and the line, even in its original form, had been weak. It was

scratched out, and half a dozen things tried, beginning with

Here, it laughs, you can find life still,

to a substitution of *taunts* for the third word; and to the determination to remove the next three words, and say "Life ——— still," using a verb in the blank space. Again the margin holds,

flourishes, 2 syllable, gaining, fighting, waiting, holding, thriving

None of these suited; and, after much deliberation, the final change was made, to the form that appears below.

The final stanza was changed only in its opening two lines, *the* replacing *that* in line one, and the more marching rhythm of

Over me, chill and bleak as snow,

substituted for the more explosive original form. And now the poem stood:

All winter long I've seen the grass,
Green, under the ice and snow,
Frozen stiff and brittle as glass,
Right down the path where people pass.

Weather at zero, and below—
And only a rare tuft shows a stain;
Its bright green heart continues to glow,
And what comes after ice, I know.

That's the thing it remembers plain.
Out into the cold its green leaves spill

A sound that is no kin of pain,
A sound brighter than hail or rain,

A sound of laughter—rocking the hill,
Harsh as clanging, clamoring brass,
Bright scornful laughter against the chill.
Here, it taunts, life's rooted still!

And in the hour when troubles mass
Over me, bleak and chill as snow,
I've laughed myself, just like the grass,
Right down the path where people pass.

This may or may not seem to you a successful poem. It was selected for this workshop exhibition because of the number of changes in it, rather than for any intrinsic excellence. The chips have flown in all directions, and this is the final product. As a rule, for your reassuring, most poems come less blurred than this, at first; they may even come needing no alteration—or, at least, none that this critic can give them. But the critical faculty must never slumber, once the verses have been written down. For sifting time will not overburden the pack over his shoulders, and if lines of ours are to find place there, they must have that rightness of phrasing that makes them featherlight in Time's eyes, though their burden be the word of a heart that would welcome Dante's lowermost hell as a balm and a consolation.

BOOK III THE KINDS OF POETRY

BOOK III THE KINDS OF POETRY

I Narrative Poetry

The Threefold Division of Poetry.—Poetry is commonly divided, from the attitude or point of view of the poet, into narrative, dramatic, and lyric poetry. Narrative poetry is that form in which the poet tells the story as if he had been a spectator, but not a participant, in the events. Dramatic poetry is that form in which the poet lets the characters to the action speak their own words, without his interpolated comments or explanations. Lyric poetry is poetry in which the poet speaks his own moods, thoughts, and aspirations.

The Epic.—An epic is a long narrative poem, dealing with heroic events, usually with supernatural guidance and participation in the action. Epics are again subdivided into natural or folk epics, and literary epics. There is a persuasive theory that folk epics are preceded by and composed of folk ballads; but the earliest known epics exhibit no traces of any welding or amalgamating process.

In Greece, the earliest literary remains are epical in character, and are written in formal hexameters or six-foot lines. There seem to have been three chief divisions of these Grecian folk epics: those concerned with war and personal romance; those celebrating the mysteries of reli-

gion; and those carrying out some didactic purpose, that is, containing certain definite teachings. To these divisions were attached the almost mythical names of Homer, Orpheus, and Hesiod. Shadowy as these dawn figures in literature are, Gilbert Murray reminds us,

> Our *Iliad, Odyssey, Erga* and *Theogony* are not the first, nor the second, nor the twelfth of such embodiments.

Some of the names even of the earliest epic poets betray their symbolic and fabulous character; Lesches, Linus, Orpheus, Arctinus, Eugammon are phantasms moving in far-off mist. Homer, whom Aristotle first treated definitely as a person, is the reputed author of three great poems, the *Iliad* and *Odyssey,* which survive, and the *Margites,* now lost. The two of these that exist have become the world's yard-stick for epic poetry; the story of the sack of Troy by the Greeks, finding its inception in the adulterous flight of Helen, Sparta's queen, with a Trojan prince, and centered around the wrath of Achilles and its effects; and the other story, of the world-wanderings of Odysseus, and his return to his native Ithaca, have never been excelled for shaped poetic narrative on a high plane.

In Sanskrit the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana,* in Persian the *Shah-nameh,* in Middle German the *Niebelungenlied,* the Anglo-Saxon *Beowulf,* in Iceland the fragments of the *Elder Edda,* in Spain the *Poem of the Cid,* the *Song of Roland* in medieval French, the Finnish *Kalevala,* are all folk epics. These were all composed before writing had become common among the respective peoples,

and were at first transmitted orally, with, in all probability, varied alterations and amendments from the human conduits through which the high old stories flowed. They grew in an hour when legends grew as rankly as bull thistles, and when credulity was omnivorous; about a man, even before his bones had rotted, marvels would begin to accumulate, until it was natural to see him magnified by popular esteem until he walked like a hill, or stepped godlike from cloud to cloud. Or it might be that the very domestic bickerings of the gods themselves entered into the machinery of the tale, and turned the tide now this way, now that, rendering the human heroes immune from all shocks, and hurricane strong in power; or paralyzing their noblest efforts like a shrivelled limb god-blasted. They have their own old charm, which cannot be recaught in a world Juggernauted, by the pressure of accumulating knowledge, scientific experimentation, and subtle social serfdoms, into a flatness where once human and half-divine mountains strode. We still build our legended heroes out of human clay; but the head of a Napoleon, a Lincoln, a Washington, a Coolidge, does not brush the shin of an Achilles or a Heracles. The age of the epic ended when men discovered that one and one make two.

But there are always the vestigial variants; and the literary epic has had its lower flight in every land. Rome played the ape to vanished golden Greece, with its literary epics, the *Annales* of Ennius and the *Aeneid* of Virgil. On the latter its author labored nine years; and, dying then, requested that the manuscript be burned, as it would have

taken him three more years to complete it. Nevertheless it seemed to the ancient world almost perfect, and is popular as a task for college undergraduates today. Compared to its two Greek prototypes, it sags; and yet it has its echoed beauties, and earned a long accolade for its inordinate genealogical flattery of the Roman soul. A score and more of lesser literary epics were produced by the Italian genuis; but the *Jerusalem Delivered* of Tasso, the *Orlando Furioso* of Ariosto, and the enormous didactic splendor of Dante's *Commedia,* are outstanding. Portugal has the *Lusiads* of Camoens, which gave form to the language, as Dante gave form to modern Italian, and as Chaucer largely gave form to English. But Chaucer's flight stayed closer to the soil than the sky-opening soaring of the epic demands. France has her literary epics, even one, the *Henriade,* by Voltaire; but these were scarcely hailed as distinguished, even in the land of their birth. *The Faerie Queene* of Spenser moves in the epic tradition, but hardly brushes even the lowest clouds. It is the *Paradise Lost* of Milton that stands, in the minds of most, as the one successful flight of the literary epic in English. Dante spoke as the laureate of medieval theology; and Milton essayed to be a tongue for England, as well as for the Puritan ideology of the Commonwealth. He achieved at least the second of these designs; but his stature has strangely shrunk in bulk in recent years.

It is a difficult thing to explain, this distaste at the singing ponderosity of the verse of the blind vaunter of Satan's manhood. We can not believe in his story; no

matter what our religious attitudes may be, they hardly accept that God or one of his resplendant archangels flung Lucifer bodily out of heaven, that he fell into hell, and that the noise of his falling made all hell tremble. The picture is bookish. We accept, even the sceptical among us, as true, for the sake of the poem, that God spoke to Job out of a hurricane, and that the Greek deities and heroes strove as Homer tells on the windswept and war-swept plain below Mount Ida; but we do not accept Milton's story. Younger, more barbarous, cultures than ours may yet hothouse literary epics; but the less pretentious narrative poems are more successful with a people as historied and science-lit as the English-speaking peoples of the world.

The Ballad.—With the ballad, we are on firmer soil. The ballad is defined as a simple tale told in simple verse. But you may prepare yourself for a wide flexibility in the usage of the repeated adjective. Ballads, again, are divided into two classes, folk ballads and literary ballads; and, in this instance, the second is at least as successful as the first. The word *ballad* is derived from the Old French *baller,* to dance, and is a variant of ballade, that strict French form of verse which will be taken up under light verse. It meant originally a song to be sung to the rhythmic moving of a dance chorus, such as the English folk-songs *London Bridge is Falling Down* or *Oats, Peas, Beans, and Barley Grow.* It is used today to mean, more often, the folksongs that told a tale; the folk narratives, which all the evidence indicates were composed to be sung to a tune;

and to mean, in the later literary sense, a similar story, with the musical accompaniment omitted. Samuel Johnson's dictionary defined the word simply as a song; it was not publicly used in its present meaning until 1813, by Ritson.

The ballad-singers had a distinguished lineage among the Germanic peoples, commencing as the revered bards, called also scalds, a word which Percy derives as meaning "smoothers and polishers of language." Their slightly less revered successors were the gleemen, the harpers, the minstrels; and the troubadours and minnesingers of France and Germany had points of similarity with their English cousin-singers. These singers were often attached to noble, even to royal, masters, with ample provision for their maintenance; and yet many of them may have found their audiences among the lesser folk. The themes of the early ballads dealt with nobility or royalty; and this fact is adduced by Louise Pound to indicate that the vulgar had no share in the composition or the auditing of the older ballads. Robin Hood, an Anglo-Saxon hero and constant friend of the downtrodden Saxons, noble and humble, is in many of the ballads connected with a noble house, and given a title, Earl of Huntingdon or some other. Miss Pound points out that Thomas Potts, a serving man, in the ballad named after him, weds a lord's daughter, and is himself ennobled; that the Kitchie Boy, hero of another, also weds a lady of noble birth; and that Richie Story, an aristocrat, marries a footman. And she triumphantly points out to the common invocation to the gentlemen to

listen to the sung story, as in the "Lyth and listen, gentlemen" which opens the most expansive of the Robin Hood ballads.

She lists all of this evidence, and never realizes for a moment that it all establishes the lower class psychology, rather than the psychology of the gentry. The butcher, the baker, the candlestick-maker, the longshoreman and the stenographer, have small interest in the doings of the world of butchers and bakers and Ford-machine makers: but they revel in tales, especially gossipy tales with the condimental intrigues, adulteries, and murders, of all that they regard as the upper classes, If any one is interested in the lower classes, it is the curious gentry, with leisure enough to lower their eyes to such microscopic fry. Robin Hood, a popular leader . . . and how should his generations of adherents lift him in their esteem, if not by ennobling him by popular wish? Earl of Huntingdon, too—a delightful pun. And, my dear zealous critic, it is not the nobles who would thrill with joy at tales of a serving man and a kitchen boy polluting the anemic blue blood of the land's lords; it is a blared wish-fulfillment of the class whose sons and relatives labor. As to the final matter, you may address a noble, or that rarer thing, a gentleman, as "Old bean" or any similar derogatory term; but beware how you address a self-respecting truckman or laundress. There is the story of the Negro man who said, in reply to a query, "You mean the lady who washes for that woman across the street?" No, all of this points to a large popular share in ballad-making.

The ballads themselves, as distinct from songs, dance games, and carols, have a swift and effective narrative style, at their best; a poignancy arising from a heart-wringing tale well told; a frequent tendency toward refrain and other forms of repetition. The Scottish ballad of *Edward, Edward* exhibits these qualities:

"Quhy dois zour brand sae drop wi' bluid,
Edward, Edward?
Quhy does zour brand sae drop wi' bluid?
And quhy sae sad gang zee, O?"

"O, I hae killed my hauke sae guid,
Mither, Mither;
O, I hae killed my hauke sae guid;
And quhy sae sad gang zee, O?"

The story proceeds with the mother's charge that the hawk's blood was never so red; whereupon the son says it was his red-roan steed that he killed. and then he confesses that it is his father that he has killed. For penance he will fare over the sea, leaving his towers and wide halls, and leaving his wife and children to beg through the rest of their lives.

"And quhat wul ze leive to zour ain mither deir,
Edward, Edward?
And quhat wul ze leive to zour ain mither deir?
My deir son, now tell me, O."

"The curse of hell frae me sall ze beir,
Mither, mither:
The curse of hell frae me sall ze beir,
Sic counseils ze gave to me, O."

There is strong meat here. It is not akin to the soft glory of Keats, the perfect blossom of Shakespeare's finer lines, the whole continent of poetry that appeals to that congeries of higher emotions which we call the soul; it is akin to our heart-wringings at the action of Shakespeare's great tragedies, to John Ford's terrible dramas, to any tale of action that shakes and sets to trembling the lower emotions which we call the body. The sadistic element in our natures responds to the constant blood-letting, the morbid side of our natures finds a rich diet. The soul lifts to such early English song, perhaps dance-song, as *Summer Is I-comen in* or *Blow, Northern Wind;* the body munches, "mumbling the bones of the slain," such food as the scareheaded horrors of modern journalism, nursery tales of horror, or the poignantly gory old ballads:

There were three ravens sat on a tree,
  Downe a downe, hay downe, hay downe,
There were three ravens sat on a tree,
They were as black as they might be.
  With a downe derrie, derrie, derrie, downe, downe.

Here the refrain is a meaningless group of sounds, which the chorus might join in easily. The ballad proceeds, the refrain always appearing, as does the repetition,

The one of them said to his mate,
"Where shall we our breakfast take?"

"Down in yonder green-e field
There lies a slain knight under his shield.

"His hounds they lie down at his feet,
So well they can their master keep.

"His hawks they fly so eagerly,
There's no fowl-e dare him come nigh."

And then

Down there comes a fallow doe,
As great with young as she might go.

She lift up his bloudy head,
And kist his wounds that were so red.

She gat him up upon her backe,
And carried him to earthen lake.

She buried him before the prime,
She was dead herself ere even-song time.

God send every gentleman
Such hounds, such hawks, and such a leman!

"Leman" means one who is dear, a person beloved, a sweetheart or mistress. In *The Lass of Lochroyan,* the "false mother" of the hero, Lord Gregory, rejects the girl and her son by the lord. He finds both dead on the sea-shore:

And then he kiss'd her pale, pale cheek,
  And kiss'd her on the chin;
And sair he kiss'd her wan, wan lips;
  But there was no breath within.

"O wae betide my cruel mother!
  An ill death may she dee!
She turn'd rair Annie from my door,
  Wha died for love of me!"

Then he's ta'en a little dart,
Hung low down by his gore,
He thrust it through and through his heart,
And words spak never more.

"Gore" here means a garment. *The Twa Brothers* tells of the slaying of one by the other, and develops somewhat as in *Edward, Edward,* to the final stanza:

"O when will ye come hame again?
Dear Willie tell to me!"—
"When the sun and moon dance on yon green;
And that will never be!"

This at least lacks the concluding curse of the other piece. Both of these last two ballads are in that form, derived from the late Latin verse, the *septenarius* or *septenary,* called *ballad meter,* whose dominant pattern is of seven iambic feet to the line; or, since this is an unwieldily long line, the same pattern divided into two lines, the first of four, the second of three, iambic feet. This dominant pattern often is liberally sprinkled with anapests, as in these lines from the great ballad of *Sir Patrick Spens:*

The king sits in Dumferline town
Drinking the blude-red wine;
"O whare will I get a skeely skipper
To sail this new ship o' mine?"

In the end the good skipper and all of his men are drowned. *Binnorie* is another magnificent story, with the younger sis-

ter, the one beloved by the knight William, drowned by her envious older sister; and a harp made of the drowned girl's breast-bone, which sang by itself a curse on the false and murderous sister. Tremendous imagination is at work in this and many of the stories.

Enough has been given of these ballads to indicate their quality, an indefinable something that still dwells only in such backward and largely illiterate people as small groups of American mountaineers, and their undeveloped kindred wherever found. Many volumes have been written on the wanderings, from mouth to mouth, of these old songs; many of the greater English ones have been found or refound among the Appalachian mountaineers, the southern Negroes, and even among the cowboys of the west. But they are for the specialist in balladry, and do not primarily concern the writer of literary ballads.

Heine, and, later, Housman, are only two among a number who have achieved brief ballads that share much of the sharp emotional thrill evoked by the folk ballads. Many of these ring with the astringent narrative swing of the better ballads, as in the eighth *Shropshire Lad* song, a brief lyric telling of one brother's murder of another:

"My mother thinks us long away;
'Tis time the field were mown.
She had two sons at rising day,
Tonight she'll be alone.

"And here's a bloody hand to shake,
And oh, man, here's good-by.
We'll sweat no more on scythe and rake,
My bloody hands and I.

"I wish you strength to bring you pride,
And a love to keep you clean,
And I wish you luck, come Lammastide,
At racing on the green.

"Long for me the rick will wait,
And long will wait the fold,
And long will stand the empty plate,
And dinner will be cold."

Here a slightly more sophisticated art replaces the art of the popular ballads, building up to the appalling strength of the homely conclusion. But the effect is the same.

Literary ballads, in a more extended form, appear in Coleridge's *Rime of the Ancient Mariner* and Chesterton's *The Ballad of the White Horse.* Coleridge uses dominantly a stanza of four lines, the divided form of ballad meter:

It is an ancient Mariner,
And he stoppeth one of three.
"By thy long grey beard and glittering eye,
Now wherefore stopp'st thou me?"

But his stanza varies fluidically with the context of the poem, until he climbs as high as a nine-line stanza, a not overly elaborate variation of the four-line one:

We listened and looked sideways up!
Fear at my heart, as at a cup,
My life-blood seemed to sip!
The stars were dim, and thick the night,
The steersman's face by his lamp gleamed white;
From the sails the dew did drip——
Till clomb above the eastern bar
The hornéd Moon, with one bright star
Within the nether tip.

The last two lines contain a statement contrary to ordinary astronomy, and multipliedly contrary to Einstein; and a thousand professors have ranted against this inaccuracy. It, and Shakespeare's sea-coast of Bohemia, are excusable, not on the ground of poetic license, but because it suited the poet's effect to use them; and because they do not seriously annoy. They are at worst forgivable slips.

The dominant stanza in Chesterton's ballad is the same, with more constant variations. The ordinary ballad rhyming is a, b, c, b; only the second and fourth lines rhyme. Chesterton uses this, but he prefers a, b, c, c, b, a five-line stanza, or a, b, c, c, c, b, a six-line stanza, the lines rhymed *b* having three feet, the others having four. The theme is typically Chestertonian:

"I tell you naught for your comfort,
Yea, naught for your desire,
Save that the sky grows darker yet
And the sea rises higher.

"Night shall be thrice night over you,
And heaven an iron cope.
Do you have joy without a cause,
Yes, faith without a hope?"

The poem is throughout phrased in magic:

And men brake out of the northern lands,
Enormous lands alone,
Where a spell is laid upon life and lust,
And the rain is changed to a silver dust,
And the sea to a great green stone.

Tennyson's *The Revenge* may properly be classed among modern literary ballads. Macaulay's *Lays of Ancient Rome,* so dear to the unsophisticated schoolboy of yesterday; Rossetti's and Kingsley's ballads; Kipling's *Barrack Room Ballads,* are only a few among many that might be listed. Lanier's *The Revenge of Hamish* is a magnificent literary ballad, telling how the lord, Maclean, had his henchman Hamish lashed for failing to turn a buck that was being hunted; and how Hamish, by seizing the lord's one child and threatening to hurl him to death over the cliffs, paid his debt by making the lord receive blow for blow; and how in the end—

And there as the motherly arms stretched out with the thanksgiving prayer,
And there as the mother crept up with a fearful swift pace,
Till her finger nigh felt of the bairnie's face,
In a flash fierce Hamish turned round and lifted the child in the air,

And sprang with the child in his arms from the horrible height in the sea.
Shrill screeching, "Revenge!" in the wind-rush; and pallid Maclean,
Age-feeble with anger and impotent pain,
Crawled up the crag, and lay flat, and locked hold of dead roots of a tree,

And gazed hungrily o'er, and the blood from his back drip-dripped in the brine,
And a sea-hawk flung down a skeleton fish as he flew,
And the mother stared white on the waste of blue,
And the wind drove a cloud to seaward, and the sun began to shine.

This gives the effect of a more bookish ballad than the others quoted. It probably arises from the fact that anapests have entirely replaced iambs as the dominant. The four lines have respectively 6, 5, 4, and 6 feet. The rhyme scheme is a, b, b, a. The rhymes have the effect of being too far apart; the first rhyme *a* is potentially forty-five syllables away from the second *a* sound; and, in place of the simple a, b, c, b or a, b, a, b of the far briefer ballad stanza norm, this seems to postpone the expected rhyming return too far. The anapest is not entirely at home in English, as a dominant; and altogether, strong as is the poem, it is not a good model to follow in writing ballads.

If you plan to write a ballad, it is well to keep in mind the usual simplicity of the story to be told, and all the other devices of the ballad-makers, folk and literary.

The Metrical Romance: Novels and Stories in Verse.— Stories of any length can be told in verse. There was an hour when tales of derring-do found their favored home here: Scott's *Marmion, The Lady of the Lake,* and *The Lay of the Last Minstrel,* Byron's *Mazeppa, The Giaour, The Corsair,* and many more, Keats's *The Eve of St. Agnes* and *Isabella,* Coleridge's torso of *Christabel,* are only the best known of a wide genre. Tennyson's best known metrical romances are his *Idylls of the King,* a soft cloudy tapestry woven of strands of the Arthurian legend. Browning, in his own way, told stories, some of them still insoluble ciphers to his admirers. Longfellow wrote the *Tales of a Wayside Inn* and many others. Masefield, in a burst of magnificent music, restored life to the narrative in verse

with the great succession, *Dauber, The Everlasting Mercy, The Widow in the Bye Street, Right Royal, Reynard the Fox,* and several others. Edwin Arlington Robinson, in the high flight of *Merlin,* and the slight droop of *Lancelot, Tristram, Roman Bartholow,* and other tales, went far higher than Tennyson in the Arthurian field, making his characters living figures in a living story, instead of tapestry figures seen behind a cloud of words softly pretty. Frost has written effective brief stories in poetry, and many a modern has attempted the task. Nor must we fail to cast an eye backward to *Venus* and *Adonis,* and the dawn vigor of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales,* and many another more ancient song.

Some of these are book length, and are in effect novels in verse. Others correspond to novelettes; the briefest are short stories, or mere tales. Prose is the popular medium today for all of these. Yet prose can never affect the emotions more than the greatest narrative poetry; and poetry has certain intangible devices which render its effects more precious than even the best prose. There is no magazine market for narratives of any considerable length; and as a rule only a limited book sale. For books of poetry have, as a rule, no pull to filch from the pocket of the would-be book-buyer his dimes and dollars; only a few rare exceptions come to mind, in these modern days. And the fault is at least divided between the versifiers and the buying public. So much verse is mediocre or bookish, that the burnt buyer dreads essaying the poetic fire which has failed so often in the past to burn him. He can

be sure of a limited thrill from a good detective or adventure story, and of a vicarious conquest from an adequate love or success story; and too often, at the end, he is not quite sure what the poet was driving at. Yet I would not give Chesterton's *Lepanto* and *The Ballad of the White Horse* for all of his inimitable Father Brown stories, with *The Napoleon of Notting Hill* thrown in; and the little finger of Edna St. Vincent Millay is prized by many as of greater worth than the bevolumed logorrhea of H. G. Wells. So poetic tales, novels, and romances will doubtless continue to be written. But their volume will be small, compared to the Mississippi flood of novels and short stories in prose.

Writing Narrative Verse.—The writer of narrative verse must keep ever in mind the requirements for good narrative prose—a good story to be told, in a manner that appeals most poignantly to the emotions. The models are manifold; and of course it is always better to familiarize yourself with both the old and the more recent models, and to keep within the modern trend. A story of today could not be well told in the quaintly redolent mood of the Ancient Mariner's story; and a story of yesterday, as Robinson demonstrated, can be adequately and superbly told in a completely modern fashion. Byron wrote, in *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* and in *Don Juan,* a blend of fiction, autobiography, and travel book; and it was inordinately popular, outselling Keats as Harold Bell Wright today outsells Robinson. Yet Byron had a withering sophistication that knew just what allspice of scandal would

season his personal narrative to the public taste; and such modern celebrities as Daddy Browning, Anna Held, and Jack Dempsey have not deemed it wise to utter their personal stories in verse. Narration and drama are two fields which prose has largely conquered; only the lyric fortress stands firm to poetry.

Accordingly, the poet who elects to write narratives in verse must keep constantly in mind that his product comes in competition not only with other stories in verse, but with prose narratives as well. The most popular stanzas have already been indicated; and a rhythm dominantly iambic, with or without constant varying anapests or other feet, if we are to follow the precedents, would be the most successful.

II Dramatic Poetry

Dramatic Poetry.—It has already been indicated that drama is, in the large, a lost domain to poetry. And yet the record of poetry is so glorious in this field, that no study of versification would be complete without dealing with drama; especially as there is one subhead of drama which poetry still retains.

The old classic division of drama was into tragedies and comedies: tragedies being those plays in which the action ended with the death of one or more of the principal characters; and comedy those in which death did not terminate the action. This division was unsatisfactory, in that the term comedy is too all-embracing. Moreover, the definition of tragedy is too limited; since there are worse fates than

death, and to require the principal character, broken in the course of the play, to continue living, might constitute a more punishing termination. Thus Edith Wharton's short novel *Ethan Frome* is profoundly moving, and its conclusion, with all three leading characters crippled, hating one another, and bound forever by their incapacities into a close hell of living together, is more tragic than the mind likes to dwell upon.

So tragedy means, today, any play in which the dominant activity of the leading character or characters fails of success, without some compensating other success. And comedy has been diversified into romantic drama, realistic comedy, burlesque, and many other minor divisions. Shakespeare wrote also history plays, or historical chronicle dramas; and recent stage successes, based upon the lives of such outstanding figures as Lincoln and Lee, have held the boards in the same tradition.

Thespis, reputed father of Greek drama, never had more than one actor, with his chorus, on the stage at one time; thus one person could assume all the dramatic rôles. Aeschylus added a second actor; Sophocles, a third; but classic Greek drama never proceeded beyond this—three actors, and a chorus. The classic unities of time and place were inviolable: that is, the action must not include more than could take place in the space of one day and its attendant night; and the place must not shift. Ben Jonson, of Shakespeare's hour, in the main modeled his plays upon the classics, acquiring thereby a stately frigidity. For it was another classic requirement that violent action must never

be shown to the audience, but must occur off stage, and be reported by a messenger. But Shakespeare, following more liberal earlier models, used his conventions of time and place as the creative mood dictated.

The typical Shakespearean play consisted of five acts; and each act normally held several scenes. There might or might not be a person called the chorus introducing the play, and speaking between the acts, to tie the story more closely together. The first three acts held the upward action, in which the chief activity of the leading characters moved onward to a crest in which it met the shock of the opposing forces. The last two acts were the downward movement, culminating in a denouement at the end. The fourth act was, in practice, the quagmire, coming after the height of the third, and before the concluding catastrophe or conquest of the fifth act. Only in *Othello,* of the great tragedies, is the fourth act wholly successful.

As modern stagecraft has developed, such a five-part scheme has become unwieldy, and the tendency is toward a three-act division. Of course, an exceptional play today can be of any length and of any divisions, Shaw's *Back to Methuselah* requiring three evenings for its performance, and Eugene O'Neill's *Strange Interlude* Parsifalling its way through an afternoon matinee and an evening performance.

The verse used in the plays of Shakespeare, and in most English poetic dramas, has been the five-foot iambic line, unrhymed. Shakespeare used scenes and parts of scenes in prose, as more suitable to low comedy, to mental derangements, and to certain other moods. He also interspersed

lyric songs in varied metres; occasional scenes in other metres (as the trochaic witch scenes in *Macbeth*); and, even in his blank verse scenes, used rhyme tags, usually rhyming couplets, to close his scenes, or mark the entrance of an important character, or for some other purpose in his stagecraft. The earlier plays had much more rhyme than the later ones.

The dramas of Shakespeare were the crest of English poetic drama; and, while many plays in verse written since have had temporary successes, none have approached the Avonian's. There have been many failures in the field; the plays of Shelley, Byron, Tennyson, and other poets, while receiving high praises, never for long held the ear of the public. A special course in drama writing would aid the aspirant in this field; a familiarity with the stage is essential, and this of course the Elizabethan dramatists had. There is some encouragement today, especially from the little theatre groups in America, for effective one-act plays; and an evening's bill may squeeze in a one-act poetic drama, preferably of the whimsical or fantastic type. But in general the field is highly constricted; and this the aspirant had best know in advance.

The Dramatic Monolog, or Dramatic Lyric.—Out of one of the least natural conventions of the older drama, the soliloquy, the genius of one poet carved a poetic form which shows no diminution of popularity. The poet was Browning, and his product is called the dramatic lyric. In it one person speaks, and, as a rule, reveals his soul in the story he tells. Such little master dramas, one-per-

soned, as *My Last Duchess, Fra Lippo Lippi, Caliban upon Setebos, Andrea Del Sarto, Mr. Sludge "The Medium,"* and countless more, etch in acid the human flies the poet has caught, and preserve them for all time. Browning's vastest product, *The Ring and the Book,* is, within a brief framework, ten tremendous dramatic monologs—the same story, told over and over as it appeared to ten vastly different personalities. In these the dominant rhythm is iambic, either unrhymed or rhymed as the poet preferred. Here is the opening of the first named. The Duke is speaking to some emissary from the family of his proposed new duchess:

> That's my last Duchess painted on the wall,
> Looking as if she were alive. I call
> That piece a wonder, now: Fra Pandolf's hands
> Worked busily a day, and there she stands:
> Wilt please you sit and look at her? I said
> "Fra Pandolf" by design, for never read
> Strangers like you that pictured countenance,
> The depth and passion of its earnest glance,
> But to myself they turned (since none puts by
> The curtain I have drawn for you, but I)
> And seemed as they would ask me, if they durst,
> How such a glance came there; so, not the first
> Are you to turn and ask thus.

And then the tragedy, of the volatile woman soul shrivelled in the not causeless jealousy of her lord and owner, comes forth.

This form is used, in much briefer compass, by the American, Edgar Lee Masters, in *The Spoon River An-*

thology. He lets his men and women speak, as if he summoned them up from the tomb to let each tell, with an unbroadened vision, what in his life led up to his death. Thus, in a satiric strain, *Daisy Fraser,* the woman of the streets, speaks:

> Did you ever hear of the Circuit Judge
> Helping anyone except the "Q" railroad,
> Or the bankers? Or did Rev. Peet or Rev. Sibley
> Give any part of their salary, earned by keeping still,
> Or speaking out as the leaders wished them to do,
> To the building of the water works?
> But I, Daisy Fraser, who always passed
> Along the streets through rows of nods and smiles
> And coughs and words such as "there she goes,"
> Never was taken before Judge Arnett
> Without contributing ten dollars and costs
> To the school fund of Spoon River!

As a technician Masters is not to be praised, as a rule. But his work was widely popular, and showed a new method of using the dramatic monolog successfully.

This vestigial survival of the poetic drama lends itself to wide usage, with almost any metric, rhythmic, and stanzaic treatment.

III Lyric Poetry

The Lyric: The Ode.—Perhaps the earliest, and certainly the most enduringly popular kind of poetry, is the lyric. As its name reveals, it signified originally poetry written

to be sung to the lyre. It is the form in which the poet utters his own dramatic monolog, phrasing his emotions, aspirations, moods, and thoughts.

The ode, the most exalted example of lyric verse, was in classic times a very strict form. The Greek Pindaric ode, attributed to the Theban Pindar, was written to be accompanied by music and dancing. It had three movements, strophe, antistrophe, and epode. The first two were identical, and had the same musical accompaniment. In the strophe, the chorus moved from a given spot on the stage to the right; in the antistrophe they moved to the left, retracing their steps. The epode varied from the two earlier movements, and was sung to a different tune, while the chorus stood still. Ben Jonson, confirmed classicist, introduced the form into English; but he has had few imitators. His odes are curiosities rather than moving poems; and while Gray did better with the form, other successors were far less successful. Other odes were sought to be based upon the chorus lines in the Greek dramas; but these too possess at best a frozen borrowed music. For, since the very unit of Greek poetry differed from that of English, it is impossible to achieve the same results today.

In English, the ode is a dignified lyric on some high theme, with constant progress in its stanzas toward the conclusion. Wordsworth's *Ode On Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood,* to give it all of its title, moves to a stately iambic beat, with varied line length. Its spirit may be garnered from:

Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting;
The Soul that rises with us, our life's Star,
Hath elsewhere its setting
And cometh from afar;
Not in entire forgetfulness,
And not in utter nakedness,
But trailing clouds of glory do we come
From God, who is our home:
Heaven lies about us in our infancy!

Other unforgettable odes are the invocation to the west wind, by Shelley, and the four odes of Keats, already studied for their stanzaic arrangement.

The Elegy; the Pastoral.—An elegy is a formal expression of the poet's grief at death, whether of an individual or in general. There is no definite metric pattern in English for the elegy. Milton, in *Lycidas,* used effectively an iambic movement, with lines of different lengths, and a fluidic rhyme scheme. Shelley, in *Adonais,* used the Spenserian stanza; Tennyson, in *In Memoriam,* the four-foot iambic line, four lines to the stanza, rhymed a, b, b, a, named after the poem. Whitman, in the great Lincoln threnody, *When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloomed,* wrote in magnificent polyrhythmic verse. Gray's celebrated elegy is in quatrains of five-foot iambic lines. Edna St. Vincent Millay rarely wrote more poignantly than in her *Memorial to D. C.,* with this exquisite little sestet,

Heap not on this mound
Roses that she loved so well;

Why bewilder her with roses,
That she cannot see or smell?
She is happy where she lies
With the dust upon her eyes.

And again,

But your singing days are done;
But the music of your talk
Never shall the chemistry
Of the secret earth restore.
All your lovely words are spoken.
Once the ivory box is broken,
Beats the golden bird no more.

Halleck's lament on the death of Joseph Rodman Drake, and Whitman's *O Captain, My Captain* are two among many short poems which are properly classed as elegies.

The pastoral is a reflective lyric poem upon some aspect of nature, formerly concerned with shepherd life. Milton's well wrought *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso* belong in this class, as does Whittier's *Snowbound*. But the form, as a separate division of poetry, has fallen into a deserved decay.

The Song; the Simple Lyric.—The great majority of modern lyrics may be classed briefly as simple lyrics, or songs. Poe held that there could be no such thing as a long poem; that one hundred lines was about the ultimate possible length of a poem. He based this upon his belief that the attention can not receive more than this stretch of concentrated emotion-stirring poetry; that, after that

limit is reached, the attention flags and sags, until it regards as mere verse what follows, no matter how high its flight may be.

There is small gain in generalizations here. If the poem is being read aloud, it tends, in the hands of an inept reader, to become verse soon after its beginning. If it is being read in quietness by a reader to himself, the poetic flight may be sustained far beyond the limit Poe set. And yet there comes an end to the rapture, a flagging in the mind's fixation and the emotional buoyancy, and the sag hour has come. But at most this is no argument against a long poem as such; it is an argument against reading the poem at one sitting. Chesterton's *Ballad of the White Horse,* Robinson's *Merlin,* are book length; and there are no stretches of intrinsic prosiness and mere versification in either. Even Browning's *The Ring and the Book* held me to the end in absorbed attention—and several extended sittings that poem took; and many of Browning's shorter things are, to me, unreadable, unintelligible, or not worth the process of excavating the meaning which, in his perverser moments, he requires.

And yet there is some reason in Poe's dictum; and the average extended versification is dead long before the hundredth line is reached. Most magazine editors believe in it thoroughly, and make their extreme limit of verse about twenty-four lines. Nor need this needlessly cripple the poetic aspirant; for many of the finest lyrics in the language are of excessive brevity. Housman, who has inspired the lesser lyricists of the race for a score of years to pattern

their songs upon his, could pack an appalling amount in a few lines:

If it chance your eye offend you
Pluck it out, lad, and be sound:
'Twill hurt, but here are salves to friend you,
And many a balsam grows on ground.

And if your hand or foot offend you,
Cut it off, lad, and be whole;
But play the man, stand up and end you,
When your sickness is your soul.

Or again, a mere twenty lines suffices for this constricted saga of love:

Along the field as we came by
A year ago, my love and I,
The aspen over stile and stone
Was talking to itself alone.
"Oh who are these that kiss and pass?
A country lover and his lass;
Two lovers looking to be wed;
And time shall put them both to bed,
But she shall lie with earth above,
And he beside another love."

And sure enough beneath the tree
There walks another love with me,
And overhead the aspen heaves
Its rainy-sounding silver leaves;
And I spell nothing in their stir,
But now perhaps they speak to her,

And plain for her to understand
They talk about a time at hand
When I shall lie with clover clad,
And she beside another lad.

An abiding beauty of phrasing, fresh in the main and wrought of strong one-syllabled Anglo-Saxon words; and an abiding youthfulness of attitude, the attitude perhaps of a worldly-wise youth of no more than a score of years. The songs have something of the pull of the old ballads: it may be that the atavistic element in us returns and dwells in this easy world of theatrical meetings and partings, of romantic emotions, so natural to the early twenties. For twenty is after all a crest of certitude, faith, and belief in our own cosmic wisdom, that we are rarely able to return to; and no one has caught this bright omniscient dawn so well as the Shropshire singer.

Nor did Shakespeare require a continent for a stage:

Fear no more the heat o' the sun
  Nor the furious winter's rages;
Thou thy worldly task hast done,
  Home art gone and ta'en thy wages:
Golden lads and girls all must,
As chimney-sweepers, come to dust.

Fear no more the frown o' the great,
  Thou art past the tyrant's stroke;
Care no more to clothe and eat;
  To thee the reed is as the oak:
The sceptre, learning, physic, must
All follow this, and come to dust.

Fear no more the lightning-flash
  Nor the all-dreaded thunder-stone;
Fear not slander, censure rash;
  Thou hast finished joy and moan:
All lovers young, all lovers must
Consign to thee, and come to dust.

The English lyric canon is long, and is packed with comfits. Take these opening stanzas from brief songs by Thomas Campion, that master lutanist of the same hour:

Thou art not fair, for all thy red and white,
  For all those rosy ornaments in thee;
Thou art not sweet, tho' made of mere delight,
  Nor fair, nor sweet—unless thou pity me.
I will not soothe thy fancies, thou shalt prove
That beauty is no beauty without love.

And this even more astringent music:

Shall I come, sweet Love, to thee
  When the evening beams are set?
Shall I not excluded be,
  Will you find no feigned let?
Let me not, for pity, more
Tell the long hours at your door.

The sheer melody in these is not to be excelled. And their beauty is accentuated, when we learn the slightly different connotations the Elizabethans gave to a few of the words and expressions. For *mere,* in "mere delight," was a far stronger word than it has grown to be in its dotage; it meant "absolute, utter, complete." And *pity me* meant just one thing: yield to me, as a lover. *Let,* in the second

stanza, means hindrance; we still properly use the phrase "let ball" (hindered ball) in tennis; while *tell,* in the same poem, means "count," as in a bank-*teller* means a counter of money in a bank.

Even the anonymous songs of the same age were gems:

My Love in her attire doth shew her wit,
It doth so well become her;
For every season she hath dressings fit,
For Winter, Spring, and Summer.
No beauty she doth miss
When all her robes are on;
But Beauty's self she is
When all her robes are gone.

And this lively opening of another unsigned song:

There is a garden in her face
Where roses and white lilies blow;
A heavenly paradise is that place,
Wherein all pleasant fruits do grow;
There cherries grow that none may buy,
Till Cherry-Ripe themselves do cry.

Ben Jonson's *To Celia* (Drink to me only with thine eyes), Herrick's *Counsel to Girls* (Gather ye rose-buds while ye may) and a score more, the songs of Waller, Suckling, Lovelace, and many more of the Caroline singers—these are but the crowns of an age rich in song. Among the most exquisite American lyrics ever written is the anonymous *Anacreontic,* by "A Gentleman of Virginia," first published in Williamsburg in 1736, or a century before Poe. For lyric song at its height weigh this:

Old Poets sing the Dame, to Stone
Converted by Jove's radiant Son:
How Progne builds her clayey cell
In Chimnies, where she once did dwell.

And, after this formal opening, the pure gold—

For me (did Fate permit to use
Whatever Forms our Fancies chuse),
I'd be my lovely Sylvia's Glass,
Still to reflect her beauteous Face;
I'd be the pure and limpid Wave,
In which my Fair delights to lave;
I'd be her Garment, still to hide
Her snowy Limbs, with decent Pride;
I'd be the Girdle, to embrace
The gradual Taper of her Wast;
I'd be her Tippet, still to press
The snowy Velvet of her Breast;
But if the rigid Fates denied
Such Ornaments of Grace and Pride,
I'd be her very Shoe, that she
With scornful Tread might trample me.

There is little in the poet's equipment that is not illustrated here. The rhythm is four-foot iambic, with a rare variation, as in line eight. The rhyme is varied by two assonances (*embrace, Wast; press, Breast*) coming one after the other, so that the extra *-t* sound strangely completes the formality of the rhyme, by its double displacement. The lyric builds progressively to a definite culmination at its end. The wording is fresh and musical, and alliteration has not been overlooked: *clayey cell, For, Fate, Forms, Fancies; lovely,*

Sylvia's, Glass (where the *-l*'s are repeated, not in accented syllable openings); *limpid, lave; Garment, Girdle, gradual; Taper, Tippet; Tread, trample.* The pause or cesura occurs at varied places in the lines:

> Old Poets sing the Dame, | to Stone. . . .
> In Chimnies, | where she once did dwell.
> For me, | (did Fate permit to use. . . .
> I'd be her Garment, | still to hide
> Her snowy Limbs, | with decent pride. . . .
> I'd be her very Shoe, | that she
> With scornful Tread might trample me.

This lyric is text for a dozen sermons on proper versification.

The lyrics of Poe have been considered. Emily Dickinson, that shy soul whose poems appeared only in posthumous volume publication, excelled most in the brief lyric, while Sidney Lanier used an emotional sweep, in his best work, as wide as Whitman's; the two *Marsh Songs, Sunrise* and *The Marshes of Glynn,* being excellent examples. The woman's brief lyrics are perfectly wrought,

> The soul selects her own society,
> Then shuts the door;
> On her divine majority
> Obtrude no more.
>
> Unmoved, she notes the chariot's pausing
> At her low gate;
> Unmoved, an emperor is kneeling
> Upon her mat.

I've know her from an ample nation
Choose one;
Then shut the valves of her attention
Like stone.

In the third and fourth lines, and in the seventh, even the grammar is a trifle ambiguous: but the meaning is not. Here we have a sophisticated ultra-modern technique, with accurate rhyming discarded for the subtler redolences of consonance (*society, majority; gate, mat; nation, attention; one, stone*) and the unnamed coupling of *pausing* and *kneeling,* where only the unaccented syllables are identical. The effect, to many modern ears, is exquisite. Here is one of her even more singing lyrics:

I taste a liquor never brewed
From tankards scooped in pearl;
Not all the vats upon the Rhine
Yield such an alcohol!

Inebriate of air am I,
And debauchee of dew,
Reeling, through endless summer days,
From inns of molten blue.

When landlords turn the drunken bee
Out of the foxglove's door,
When butterflies renounce their drams,
I shall but drink the more!

Till seraphs swing their snowy hats,
And saints to windows run,
To see the little tippler
Leaning against the sun.

Or this brief love song, with its *opening rhyme* added to end-rhyme in the first two lines:

Alter? When the hills do.
Falter? When the sun
Question if his glory
Be the perfect one.

Surfeit? When the daffodil
Doth of the dew;
Even as herself, O friend!
I will of you!

Such Lyrics as Miss Millay's superb *Travel* and *Doubt No More that Oberon,* John Hall Wheelock's *Sunday Evening in the Common,* Amy Lowell's unexpectedly poignant *Nuit Blanche,* Elinor Wylie's *Sanctuary, Pity Me,* and this *Escape,* show how completely the modern voices of our land have mastered the simple lyric:

When foxes eat the last gold grape,
  And the last white antelope is killed,
I shall stop fighting and escape
  Into a little house I'll build.

But first I'll shrink to fairy size,
  With a whisper no one understands,
Making blind moons of all your eyes,
  And muddy roads of all your hands.

And you may grope for me in vain
  In hollows under the mangrove root,
Or where, in apple-scented rain,
  The silver wasp-nests hang like fruit.

Rose O'Neill cries aloud for extended quotation, from the wide gesture of *Oh Come, My Darkness* and *The Eagle Hunter* to the luted beauty of *Sale, As I Went By, Now That I Am Lame,* and *Established.* We quote the last named:

I made a house of houselessness,
  A garden of your going;
And seven trees of seven wounds
  You gave me, all unknowing:
I made a feast of golden grief
  That you so lordly left me,
I made a bed of all the smiles
  Whereof your lips bereft me:
I made a sun of your delay,
  Your daily loss, his setting:
I made a wall of all your words
  And a lock of your forgetting.

Robert Frost uses the colloquial touch as poignantly in his lyrics as the others have used the more bookish speech; and Miss O'Neill, in *The Betrayed,* a "Poor cradle-song," elevates dialect into a thing as exquisite as Burns found it:

Fooled one, fooled one,
  Hush your little grieving;
Because you were so little
  We fooled you into living.
Because you were so little
  We gave you to the tear,
But your father and your mother
  Were so young last year!

Fooled one, fooled one,
I never thought to tell you
What a fix the world was,
And how they buy and sell you.
You should have a golden cradle,
You should have a silver stool,
But when your little words come,
Don't let the words be crool.

Fooled one, fooled one,
When my dove is sleeping,
I'm playing that you *don't know,*
Till cruel dawn is creeping;
Like a safe little dream-babe,
That neither sees nor hears.
But oh, *it is your looking,*
With your little wild tears!

Some day, some day,
In scarlet coat and breeches
You'll be chasing foxes
With your fine hound bitches;
And sporting velvet ladies
To the King of Ireland's ball,
And if you see me by the road,
You needn't look at all.

Here the first three stanzas have a homely imperfection of technique that is reminiscent of the ballad, and shares the old appeal of that form. The sudden fanfare of day-dream pride at the end moves from the rich hunting chromo into the joyful "sporting velvet ladies" to the most madly appropriate of all places, the farthest day-

dream of all. Then with a sudden flash the velvet cavalcade flings its dust upon the stooped old mother by the roadside; and she who made the scene ties the pathos together with the last crooning line. . . . The mother's apotheosis of her child, hell gladly paid in mother-love for heaven for the beloved one. And the younger generation that glitters out of the slums and out of sight of the hearts that made its elevation possible. All of this poignancy: of such may the lyric be blent.

The lyrics of Sara Teasdale, Jessie Rittenhouse, and many more of our woman singers, are softer, yet constantly beautiful. This from Miss Teasdale:

> When I am dead, and over me bright April
> Shakes out her rain-drenched hair,
> Tho' you should lean above me broken-hearted,
> I shall not care.
>
> I shall have peace, as leafy trees are peaceful
> When rain bends down the bough,
> And I shall be more silent and cold-hearted
> Than you are now.

The whole chapter, *Sappho's Cousins,* may be studied in this connection, as a tribute to our native lyricists. One of the least discovered among them, Vivian Swerig, constantly repeats strains as lovely as this *Plain Fare:*

> You seek all the beauty
> Of moonlight full gleaming,
> You ask that the wind
> In great pines sing a tune,

You long for the music
Of waters slow flowing,
On smooth stones returning
Her light to the moon:

What more would you ask
Of a bird than its singing?
What more would you have
Of a ship than tall spars?
What more would you seek
Of the sun than its shining,—
Of the night
Than a sky full of stars?

This is an amphibrachic movement, or an anapestic one, as you choose to name it—not at ease ordinarily in English, and yet here used with sure control. The conclusion is startlingly beautiful. Another of her songs, *Bring With You,* is differently lovely:

Bring with you but the touch of your slim fingers,
And with the quietness which bending skies
Have learned from leaning down to hold the still earth,
Lay them upon my hair, upon my eyes.

Bring with you but the softness of your small breasts;
There my lips will dwell in blind delight,
And sun and moon and stars may dim, nor stir me
Who know your beauty singing through the night.

The excess of passion in the seventh line is akin to Burns's:

And I will luve thee still, my dear,
Till a' the seas gang dry:

Till a' the seas gang dry, my dear,
And the rocks melt wi' the sun.

I will never forget my own lesson in the Babbitt scorn of the world at such fine frenzy. One of my early lyrics was:

If the seas dry and the lands burn
And the day goes blind,
If the round earth grow a dead thing,
Why should I mind?

If the stars freeze and the skies freeze,
I could turn to you;
But if your love grow a dead thing,
I die too.

With unholy glee some mid-Western newspaper wag found this, and set up the first stanza with an altered title:

He Should Worry

Recall James Thomson's couplet:

Singing is sweet; but be sure of this,
Lips only sing when they cannot kiss,

and widen your heart toward forgiveness of the lyric poet, when he exceeds reason in his utterance of his desire, which may be bloated within his spirit into an agony. But the wagging world will get its chuckle, and, since it thereby forfeits any vicarious tremor from the agony, it is poorly enough rewarded.

The lyric can be written in polyrhythmic poetry or free verse, as well as in metric forms. Sandburg has been at times highly successful in this, and many have followed him. Here is a brief song by Gloria Goddard, *A Sycamore in Spring:*

Naked and unabashed, you wait on the hilltop,
Flaunting your uxorious want
Against the dull dismay of a gray farmhouse.
Your bare limbs,
Ivoried by winter's feasting,
Yearn toward an aching sky;
In fingers tenuous with longing,
You clutch a raucous crow.
Still as figures scrawled on paper
You wait for the spring wind
Creeping stealthily over the hill,
To quicken you with its throbbing kiss,
To tumble you
To ripe fruit and riper leaf.

We can not better conclude this study of typical lyrics than by quoting from the name poem in John V. A. Weaver's *To Youth:*

This I say to you.
Be arrogant! Be true!
True to April lust that sings
Through your veins. These sharp springs
Matter most. . . . Afteryears
Will be time enough for sleep. . . .
Carefulness . . . and tears. . . .

Now, while life is raw and new,
Drink it clear, drink it deep!
Let the moonlight's lunacy
Tear away your cautions. Be
Proud, and mad, and young, and free!
Grasp a comet! Kick at stars
Laughingly! Fight! Dare!
Arms are soft, breasts are white,
Magic's in the April night——

Never fear. Age will catch you,
Slow you down, ere it dispatch you
To your long and solemn quiet. . . .
What will matter then the riot
Of the lilacs in the wind?
What will mean—then—the crush
Of lips at hours when birds hush?

Purple, green and flame will end
In a calm, gray blend.
Only . . . graven in your soul
After all the rest is gone
There will be the ecstasies. . . .
These alone.

Writing the Lyric.—It is that sort of advice that furnishes an admirable text, in treating of writing the lyric. Be arrogant: be true: true to the youth, it is to be hoped to the endless and perennial youth, that sings through your veins. "After all the rest is gone There will be the ecstasies, These alone": so the poet assures us, and the poet is ever a safe guide to poets. The song, or simple lyric, is the most direct of all the forms of poetry, and is the one in

which many of the masters of song have found their highest flights. The song, to be properly written, calls for a soul-absorption of all of the lore of rhythm and metre; or rhyme, assonance, consonance, alliteration, and word melody; of stanza patterns, rhymed and unrhymed. Having mastered this technique, you can turn yourself loose in the field, and write your own best words.

There are certain inevitable cautions. Avoid themes too over-used, as you avoid a dead vocabulary and echoes from other poets. But all of this advice is subject to exception: you may find, in your song, a proper home for any word, exhumed or not, for your fire may breathe life into it. And there is no theme that may not be lifted again in a new and strange music.

Brevity is a thing to strive for, and concentration. Most of the lyrics quoted glory in these two qualities. Yet there must not be an excessive packing, any hint (in the best flow of song) of—

> Irks care the maw-crammed beast? Frets doubt the crop-full bird?

Any appearance of effort, any straining after effect, should be avoided, since they mar the simplicity of your finished song. The whole technical equipment of all the poets is not too much to possess, when you sit down to write your own song. It will obscure itself back in some dim reaches of your subconscious equipment, and from this hidden point dictate a music that, if you are well-starred, others will hail as high and perdurable.

The Sonnet.—The sonnet is a fixed form, a lyric poem

of fourteen iambic five-foot lines, with a defined and definite rhyme scheme. There are two major forms of it in use in English, the Italian or Petrarchan, and the Shakespearean. The following sonnet of Wordsworth's is an excellent example of the former, the Italian sonnet:

The world is too much with us; late and soon, (*a*)
Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers; (*b*)
Little we see in Nature that is ours; (*b*)
We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon: (*a*)
The Sea that bares her bosom to the moon, (*a*)
The winds that will be howling at all hours, (*b*)
And are upgathered now like sleeping flowers; (*b*)
For this, for everything, we are out of tune; (*a*)
It moves us not.—Great God! I'd rather be (*c*)
A Pagan suckled in a creed outworn; (*d*)
So might I, standing on this pleasant lea, (*c*)
Have glimpses that might make me less forlorn; (*d*)
Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea, (*c*)
Or hear old Triton blow his wreathed horn. (*d*)

The first eight lines here, called the octave, are rhymed a, b, b, a; a, b, b, a. The sestet, the concluding six lines, is here rhymed c, d, c, d, c, d. The strict Petrarchan form is most rigid of all. The octave rhyme must follow the pattern a, b, b, a; a, b, b, a, as in the example given. The sestet may rhyme c, d, c, d, c, d; or c, d, e, c, d, e, the latter being the preferred type.

But the strict Petrarchan sonnet has also a definite and rigid requirement as to the treatment of the theme—a requirement which Wordsworth deliberately breaks in the

example given. The quatrains must be end-stopped, the first one introducing the subject and developing it in a certain direction; the second continuing this development in the same general direction; the sestet introducing a new direction of the theme, with its first tercet carrying this new direction to a definite point; and the final tercet bringing the theme to a conclusion. Thus there are, in effect, four rigid end-stopped stanzas, of four, four, three, and three lines; and no two of these should be amalgamated. The division between the octave and the sestet was especially sacred, with run-on lines never permitted. Wordsworth introduced a variation, in that he ran on his eighth line into part of the ninth:

> For this, for everything, we are out of tune;
> It moves us not.—Great God, I'd rather be

and so onward. Milton is closer to the pure Italian model in his sonnet, *When the Assault Was Intended to the City;* but the greater sonnet by Milton, *On His Blindness,* has the run-on of the eighth line found in the Wordsworthian example. There seems small reason for following the absolute theme and stanza formality of the Italian model; but there is every gain, if the Italian model is to be followed, in having as an invariable octave pattern a, b, b, a; a, b, b, a; and, for the sestet, a choice between c, d, e, c, d, e, and c, d, c, d, c, d.

Yet poets are kittle cattle; and their unmanageability is nowhere better illustrated than in the liberties they have taken with this scheme. Wordsworth was fond of a varia-

tion in the octave scheme, using a, b, b, a; a, c, c, a instead of the two-rhyme form. An example appears in his *On the Extinction of the Venetian Republic:*

Once did she hold the gorgeous east in fee (*a*)
And was the safeguard of the west; the worth (*b*)
Of Venice did not fall below her birth, (*b*)
Venice, the eldest Child of Liberty. (*a*)
She was a maiden City, bright and free; (*a*)
No guile seduced, no force could violate; (*c*)
And when she took unto herself a Mate, (*c*)
She must espouse the everlasting Sea. (*a*)

And what if she had seen those glories fade, (*d*)
Those titles vanish, and that strength decay; (*e*)
Yet shall some tribute of regret be paid (*d*)
When her long life hath reached its final day; (*e*)
Men are we, and must grieve when even the Shade (*d*)
Of that which once was great, is passed away. (*e*)

Professor L. T. Weeks examined 6,283 sonnets for their forms, and established that the terminal sestet rhyme of c, d, e, c, d, e had reappeared in the following arrangements in them:

c,d,e,c,d,e	c,c,d,e,e,d
c,d,c,d,e,e	c,d,e,e,c,d
c,d,d,c,e,e	c,d,e,e,d,c
c,d,e,d,c,e	c,d,d,e,c,e
c,d,c,e,d,e	c,d,e,d,e,c
c,d,e,c,e,d	c,d,c,e,e,d

Only two of these have terminal couplets, perhaps the most regrettable variant of the Italian sonnet; but six others

include a couplet rhyme somewhere within the sestet. Variants of the terminal sestet scheme c, d, c, d, c, d, are:

c,d,c,d,c,d	c,d,c,d,d,c
c,d,d,c,c,d	c,d,c,c,d,d
c,d,d,c,d,c	c,d,c,c,d,c

with one example of terminal rhymed couplet, and each of the others necessarily including a couplet rhyme somewhere. There is surely no sin in following the stricter rhyming pattern; but, when the skill or the inspiration dictates a different sequence, we recur to the test of, Is it a poem? And if this is answered in the affirmative, the lesser test, Is it a sonnet? may be construed as strictly or not as we choose. Shelley went all amuck in his fine poem *Ozymandias:*

I met a traveler from an antique land, (*a*)
Who said: Two vast and trunkless legs of stone (*b*)
Stand in the desert. Near them on the sand (*a*)
Half sunk, a shattered visage lies, whose frown (*b*)
And wrinkled lip and sneer of cold command (*a*)
Tell that its sculptor well those passions read (*c*)
Which yet survive, stamped on these lifeless things, (*d*)
The hand that mocked them and the heart that fed; (*c*)
And on the pedestal these words appear: (*e*)
"My name is Ozymandias, king of kings: (*d*)
Look on my works, ye mighty, and despair!" (*e*)
Nothing beside remains. Round the decay (*f*)
Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare, (*e*)
The lone and level sands stretch far away. (*f*)

There is not even a separating rhyme scheme between octave and sestet: we have, a, b, a, b; a, c, d, c; e, d, e, f, e, f.

There are, too, the consonances *stone, frown; appear, despair, bare.* I can well sympathize with such a divagation; for here is one of my own fourteen line poems, which refused to be a sonnet, due to the fact that the opening terminal word, *cordage,* had no rhyming mate that occurred immediately, and I let the unmated word dictate the further form of the verses. I give it, not as a sonnet, but as a country cousin of the sonnet:

NIGHT ENTRANCE

The cradle moon beyond the creaking cordage, (*a*)
The wide road of silver over the sea, (*b*)
And, at the side, swishing eternally, (*b*)
The lapping water tonguing us hungrily. (*b*)
Low glow-edged clouds like breasted incredible mountains; (*c*)
Jutting rocks black in the moon's pour; (*d*)
The far twinkle of lights on ship and shore; (*d*)
And our loosed island rooted to earth once more. (*d*)
The glittering brilliance of the southern heavens: (*e*)
With barred Orion wheeling over us, (*f*)
And the low golden splendor of Canopus, (*f*)
Followed by the all alien Southern Cross; (*f*)
And the pole star, flickering and very dim, (*g*)
Eternally on the horizon rim. (*g*)

Here the first eight lines rhyme a, b, b, b; c, d, d, d; and the last six, e, f, f, f; g, g. There are certain rhyming devices which should be mentioned, toward the ending. There is the consonance between *us* and *Cross;* and the rhyme caused by a twisted accent, since *Canopus* ordinarily is accented in its central syllable, and the unaccented terminal

-us faintly rhymes with *us* and *Cross*. This device, constantly used in the old ballads, as in the near rhymes *spring, charming; dead, faded,* is still another variant of correct rhyming.

So much for the Italian or Petrarchan sonnet; the second variety is the Shakespearean, English, or Elizabethan sonnet. It consists of three quatrains, rhymed alternately, and a concluding couplet, all written in the five-foot iambic line. The rhyming scheme appears in the following example, Shakespeare's sixty-sixth sonnet:

Tired with all these, for restful death I cry,— (*a*)
As, to behold desert a beggar born, (*b*)
And needy nothing trimmed in jollity, (*a*)
And purest faith unhappily forsworn, (*b*)
And gilded honour shamefully misplac'd, (*c*)
And maiden virtue rudely strumpeted, (*d*)
And right perfection wrongfully disgrac'd, (*c*)
And strength by limping sway disabled, (*d*)
And art made tongue-tied by authority, (*e*)
And folly doctor-like controlling skill, (*f*)
And simple truth miscalled simplicity, (*e*)
And captive good attending captain ill; (*f*)
Tired with all these, from these I would be gone, (*g*)
Save that, to die, I leave my love alone. (*g*)

The rhyme scheme here is, a, b, a, b; c, d, c, d; e, f, e, f; g, g. As a rule, each quatrain is end-stopped, in Shakespeare's own sonnets, and the concluding couplet has almost an epigrammatic snap to it. Rarely does he let lines four, eight, or twelve carry on, as in the sixty-second sonnet the fourth and fifth lines interlock:

With lines and wrinkles, when his youthful morn
Hath travelled on to age's steepy night.

Sir Philip Sidney varied this rhyming scheme by rhyming the second quatrain on the same rhymes as the first, so that his scheme was: a, b, a, b; a, b, a, b; c, d, c, d; e, e. Spenser, in his hundred and twenty sonnets, used a chain-verse device of inter-locking rhymes, his sonnet rhyme scheme proceeding: a, b, a, b; b, c, b, c; c, d, c, d; e, e. But neither of these variations has found favor with later poets. Keats, in his second sonnet on *Fame* (How fevered is the man who cannot look) wedded the Shakespearean octave to the Italian sestet, with the rhyme scheme a, b, a, b; c, d, c, d; e, f, e, g, g, f. Rupert Brooke in the first and fifth of his well-known soldier sonnets, used a similar blending, as the second of the two indicates:

If I should die, think only this of me:
That there's some corner of a foreign field
That is for ever England. There shall be
In that rich earth a richer dust concealed;
A dust whom England bore, shaped, made aware,
Gave, once, her flowers to love, her ways to roam,
A body of England's, breathing English air,
Washed by the rivers, blest by suns of home.

And think, this heart, all evil shed away,
A pulse in the eternal mind, no less
Gives somewhere back the thoughts by England given,
Her sights and sounds; dreams happy as her day;
And laughter, learnt of friends; and gentleness,
In hearts at peace, under an English heaven.

The second of this sequence of five sonnets follows the strict Shakespearean scheme; the third wanders into a, b, b, a; c, d, d, c; e, f, e, g, f, g; the fourth has the scheme a, b, a, b; c, d, c, d; e, e, f, g, f, g. The effectiveness of these sonnets as poems was hailed by many; this was hardly evitable when the poet summoned out such rich music as the glorious line "Blow out, you bugles, over the rich dead." The wanderings from the strict models are facts in the history of poetry; and, where the burden of thought or desire imperatively dictates it, such liberties are taken, and do not affect the merit of the poem in the eyes of those who share in its word.

Of all living English sonneteers, Masefield is treasured most by many, especially in the sonnets included in *Enslaved and Other Poems*—and I am not forgetful of high success in the field attained by Chesterton and others. But the sonnet sequence "Like bones the ruins of the cities stand," *The Lemmings,* the two magnificent sonnets *On Growing Old,* and *Forget:*

> Forget all these, the barren fool in power,
> The madman in command, the jealous O,
> The bitter world biting its bitter hour,
> The cruel now, the happy long ago,
>
> Forget all these, for, though they truly hurt,
> Even to the soul, they are not lasting things;
> Men are no gods; we tread the city dirt,
> But in our souls we can be queens and kings.
>
> And I, O Beauty, O divine white wonder,
> On whom my dull eyes blind to all else, peer,

Have you for peace, that not the whole war's thunder
Nor the world's wreck, can threat or take from here.

So you remain, though all man's passionate seas
Roar their blind tides, I can forget all these.

In America, the list of distinguished sonnet writers is not brief. Many of the poets already mentioned have done well in the form, notably Robinson and Miss Millay. Perhaps Arthur Davison Ficke has been most hauntingly successful, as in the wide movement of:

Since beauty holds no lease of settled date,
And youth has tenure but while roses blow,
And mortal hope must yield to mortal fate,
And every dream that comes must one day go—
Since these most lovely phantoms cannot be
Companions in the gray years that confess
Wild love to hold life's chiefest sovereignty,
Yet must without it seek for happiness—
Then let the autumn of the soul become
Transfigured with its own appropriate hues;
As in high pageant, when the flowers are dumb,
Old forests lift the splendor earth must lose,
And hills with solemn foliage of the fall
Outvaunt the spring, in phantom festival.

He is as maddeningly effective in the stately measure of:

Not all my will can change this casque of bone
That predeterminates what each thought must be;
And I have learned to bear with these my own
Enforced defects and doomed futility,

And with reproach no longer rack a skull
Whose rigid plan, conditioned long ago,
Left such low arches for the beautiful
To pour its summer light through. Now I know
Somewhat the measure of what may be done
And may not by this child of a dark race
Who in the long processions of the sun
Today for a brief moment takes his place.
I bid him bear his banner with the rest,
Nor too much blame the dusk that haunts his breast.

The gentler sonnets of David Morton, the wrought symmetry of Elinor Wylie's excursions into the field, the constant excellence of Harold Vinal's sonnets, earn at least a mention here. And here is one of my own sonnets, showing a different use of the medium—a sonnet called *Progress:*

Tall columns like gray snow against the green:
A locomotive screaming over a crossing.
The owl, the snaky locks, in brooding stone:
A steam-derrick in agonized creaking and hissing.
Perpetual poise of arm and javelin:
Motors catapulting into a valley.
A gold vase silence is buried in:
Sirens out of the fog bellowing shrilly.
A pyramid frozen toward its star:
Whirr of metallic birds lifting and roaring.
Endless dull sand, where footprints never were:
Square-windowed towers heavenward endlessly sneering.
Light-hearted men, saddened, dying, dead:
Light-hearted men, saddened, dying, dead.

This varies from the Shakespearean model as a pattern. Consonance replaces rhyme in many of the lines; and the conclusion behaves strangely, since it repeats the line immediately preceding it—all dictated by what the poet had to say. The rhythm seeks to accentuate the contrast between yesterday and today, with what success each reader must judge for himself.

The sonnet is used by many poets as a fourteen-line stanza in a longer poem. Many of the Elizabethan sonnet sequences illustrate this; more recent examples are those from Masefield and Ficke. In writing the sonnet, it will do no harm to write down letters indicating the rhyme scheme in the right-hand margin of your sheet of paper, and thereafter write to this. If the progress of the writing varies from whichever form you have chosen as your model, you will at once be aware of it, and either accept or reject the variation, as your own critical sense dictates. In general, in this, as in all fixed forms, the closer you hew to the pattern, the more effective will be your achievement.

Other Fixed Forms.—Many other forms have been borrowed from other languages, or have sprung up autochthonously among us, to enjoy a brief vogue, and either to survive or to disappear, depending on the receptivity of the poets toward the experiment. Thus the *cinquain,* or five-lined form, used by Adelaide Crapsey, as in the example given, has become a much imitated form. Here is her *The Warning:*

Just now,
Out of the strange
Still dusk . . . as strange, as still . . .
A white moth flew. Why am I grown
So cold?

This is unrhymed; it is five iambic lines, with, respectively, one, two, three, four, and one feet to the lines.

The *sonnette,* a seven-lined stanza hardly differing from the Canopus stanza already explained, has become popular, since its origination by Sherman Ripley. Its two stanzas, a quatrain and a tercet, are rhymed a, b, b, a; c, b, c. The lines are five-foot iambic. It is easy to write; for instance, here is one upon the theme *Pyramid by Moonlight:*

Out of the silver dark an incredible white
Mountain, man-shaped, towering over the plain;
Not rough and jagged, as if the earth's pain
Had spewed it forth, but straight-lined, with no slight
Departure from the measuring-rod. It looms
More stark than earth's raw hills; we shrink, and strain
Away, from this gross undecaying tomb.

The Japanese forms, the *tanka* and the *hokku,* follow the Japanese poetry (*tanka* or *uta*) in having alternation of lines of five and seven syllables. The hokku (or haikai) consists in only three lines, of 5, 7, and 5 syllables, or 17 in all. The most ordinary form of the tanka has 31 syllables, consisting of five lines, with the syllables of the lines respectively 5, 7, 5, 7, and 7. Longer poems may be constructed in the tanka form, with the invariable alternation

of 5 and 7 syllables to the line, except at the conclusion. An example of the hokku would be:

More fleeting than the
Flash of withered windblown leaf,
This thing men call life.

This is translated from the Japanese. The longer form, the tanka, would be:

The rippling sea-swell,
Curling upon the gold sand,
And, curving over,
A bough of cherry blossoms,—
Youth shielding eternal age.

The rhythm here does not concern us; we have passed outside of poetry measured by accent and rhythm, and come into a new convention, namely, the number of syllables to the line. If the model is followed accurately, we have verse; if the result gives the emotional thrill we receive from great poems, the product is poetry.

IV Other Kinds of Poetry

Didactic and Other Verse.—The Duchess in *Alice in Wonderland* uttered the sage observation, "Everything's got a moral, if only you can find it." The Greeks took this so literally, that they had a special division of poetry, didactic poetry, whose purpose was to instruct the mind and improve the morals of the reader or hearer. Prose had not been invented, as a literary form, to contain the sage saws of age, the folk-information and first fore-shadowings of

scientific knowledge that must be transmitted on from generation to generation; and so verse was adopted to this purpose, and the half-mythical Hesiod was esteemed to be the fountain-head of this teaching verse. This alleged Bœotian tiller of the soil is said to have written the *Works and Days,* which still exists, to contain his ponderous rules on agriculture, for the mental delectation of his farming neighbors; lost works attributed to the same singer include studies of astronomy, of auguries from birds, and one on the character of the physical world. As Greece reached toward maturity, the stream of didactic verse began to concern itself chiefly with theological teachings concerning the deities in the Greek pantheon.

Greatest of all the classic didactic poets was the passionate Roman philosopher Lucretius, whose sweeping *De Rerum Natura* (On the Nature of Things) was composed in the first century before Christ. Succeeding early English attempts was Thomas Tusser's *Hundreth Pointes of Good Husbandrie,* a versified treatise on farming appearing in 1557. There is much of the teachy-preachy in Pope and Gay, and still more in many of their humbler contemporaries. In spite of later ridicule, great versified treatises on the humbler crafts continued for years to appear in England. France and Germany saw a similar process; but the Latin genius spoke with more fire, when it did speak didactically, and Dante's great theological poem is the outstanding example since classic times in the doubtful genre. The first volume published in English in the Americas was *The Psalms in Metre, Faithfully Translated*

for the Use, Edification, and Comfort of the Saints, in Public and Private, especially in New England, appearing in 1640, with a definite didactic purpose. The New Englander, the Reverend Michael Wigglesworth, silenced vocally in his pastorate by an affection of the lungs, lifted didactic strains which passed through six American and one London edition, entitled *The Day of Doom, or a Poetical Description of the Great and Last Judgment, with a Short Discourse about Eternity,* and cantering on:

> Still was the night, serene and bright,
> When all men sleeping lay;
> Calm was the season, and carnal reason
> Thought so 'twould last for aye.

One of my most prized volumes is entitled: *The Problem of Human Life Here and Hereafter,* "by the author of 'Zupah,' " published in New York City in 1877, and dealing with "A Discussion of Modern Evolution.—Origin of Animal Life.—Impossibility of Spontaneous Generation.—Nature of the so-called Forces and Modes of Motion.—The Undulatory Theories of Sound, Light, and Heat assailed," and so on and on. We turn to "Chapter IV. The Nature of Light, Gravitation, Etc.," and read:

> Having thus prepared the reader
> By a somewhat broken series
> Of preliminary reasons
> For man's entity of being,
> Light will now be demonstrated
> As substantial emanations
> From the luminiferous body,—

Being formed of myriad granules
Of attenuated matter,
And of such surpassing fineness
That the mind becomes bewildered
When attempting to conceive them
As allied to grosser substance,
Such as ponderable objects.
This comports with common reason,
And with every phase of science,
As I shall proceed to argue:

And he does. The volume is 343 pages long, with two columns of this verse to the page; and, while some prose obtrudes toward the end, most of it is in this prosier versified balderdash. For didactic poetry, modern critics are unanimous, is as extinct as the dodo or the legend of invariable presidential wisdom. The true purpose of poetry is not to instruct, either in facts or to the betterment of one's morals.

Yet delightful vestiges still appear from time to time. There is James Byron Elmore's priceless *Love Among the Mistletoe and Poems* (1908), simply reeking with valuable moral lessons, as in the stern preachment upon *Alcohol:*

Alcohol is like a snake:
  It can't be kept in bounds;
It makes of one a perfect wreck,
  A wandering vagrant hound.

It steals away an active brain,
  And fills one with remorse,

And causes people to go insane,
Their soul is all morose.

In dread of those, we stand in awe,
Who tipple at the wine.
They all disgrace the moral laws—
Their manners are unkind.

This is simply inimitable, whether from its daring consonances (*snake, wreck; bounds, hound,* and so forth), or from the extraordinary climax at the ends of the stanzas. Miss Mary Ann O'Byrne of Watervliet, New York, is one of the most didactic voices in poetry, her frequent volumes, published at Cohoes and later at Watervliet, positively pulsing with moralistic saws and practical lessons in deportment. There is her *Address to Young Ladies:*

Now all of you young ladies
When young men your company will seek,
Do not waste your time with any man
Who good hours do not keep. . . .

Therefore to lonely walks and carriage riding
With him you must not go,
Or your happiness and liberty
You may forever overthrow. . . .

And no lady or gentleman
Ever took lonely walks or rides alone,
And returned with as clear a conscience
As when they left their home. . . .

And no man will insult you
  Unless he thinks you are a fool,
But if you let the back of your hand fly heavily on his mouth
  His passion it will cool. . . .

And if you give him the nose bleed
  It will help clear his brain,
Then the greatest respect for you
  He will ever afterwards maintain.

All of her verse is worth quoting; and yet, she belongs to the outworn school of didactic versifiers, and, while they may utilize the technique of poetry, they can not evoke its emotional response. It is a different emotion that they awake, as in the instances quoted.

BOOK IV FORMAL, LIGHT, AND HUMOROUS VERSE

BOOK IV FORMAL, LIGHT, AND HUMOROUS VERSE

I French and Other Fixed Forms

The Realm of Light Verse.—We have now seen the versifier in English equipped with most of the indigenous lore of his craft, and qualified technically to produce song that will wring the emotions of his hearers and readers, earn him the accolade of poet, and his product the high badge of poetry. But the poet is, after all, a man, in the generic androcentric use of the term; and man differs from the rest of the animals in that he laughs, or laughs more constantly and systematically, than they. His laugh is a sound as light as thistledown at times, and at times it is as terrible as the roll of musketry or the blast of cannonading. Lambs, puppies, kittens, and such small folk, gamble and curvet and roll on their backs on green grass, and, in the case of city animals, on wood and brick and asphalt; even dignified rams and ewes, sedate dogs and esteemed bitches, disdainful tomcats and respectable tabbies, have been known to share in such ebullient pastimes. And so the poets gambol and curvet and roll on their backs, in their verse at least. In general, no device of poetry has not been used with a gay heart or a high deri-

sion, to express some flitting gaiety or some deep hurt in the poet's soul.

Aristophanes was one of the greatest of Greek poets; and he used his verse to jeer and jibe at what, to him, did not go well in the world. Shakespeare, master craftsman in playing upon man's emotions, broke the most dreadful spell of his tragedies by raw comedy—by the drunken porter in *Macbeth,* by the episode of Cinna the poet in *Julius Caesar:* and his succession of masterly comic figures, Falstaff, Bottom, Sir Toby Belch, Sir Andrew Aguecheek, and their lesser kindred, is as immortal as the vacillating Danish prince or the torrential Moorish general. We are even meant to laugh at Shylock's extremity, at the trollop Cressid, at the subhuman wallowings of Caliban, as at the drunken antics of the spindrift sailors on Prospero's isle. The fellow Elizabethans were highly successful in comedy on the stage, using verse as their medium; and the Restoration wits evoked the ribald merriment of their audiences as often as they summoned forth the leer or the suggestive snicker.

The caustic Dryden, the wasp Pope, stung with satire as effectively as classic Juvenal had done, and achieved pastorals and gentle society verse as effective as Horace. Byron, seared by the critics, roasted them whole, and amused the semi-scandalized English world with the lighter passages in his semi-autobiographical long poems. Coleridge, Keats even, gambolled as the mood struck them; Burns, in the joyous *Tam o' Shanter's Ride* and often elsewhere, roared with gargantuan mirth. There have been

many singers who were greater as writers of light and humorous verse than as serious poets, Guy Wetmore Carryl and Gilbert for example; and others, like Thomas Hood, who shone in both fields.

In general, the metrical equipment used has been the same as that used in serious poetry, with the difference in metre and rhyme that the mood demanded. The wide formal world of fixed French and similar verse-forms was devised to hold serious poetry, in the main; and it might have been treated in the discussion of stanza forms and fixed poem schemes, like the sonnet. But, in English, these forms appear most frequently with some mood of lightness; their essential strictness of technical requirement renders them unfit, even in the hands of a master like Swinburne, to carry the highest poetical flights, when compared with looser verse devices. And so they are here considered under the general heading of formal light and humorous verse. But it must be remembered that any one of these forms may be used as authentic poetry, as well as authentic verse: John McCrae's *In Flanders Fields,* the most quoted poem evoked by the World War, and Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *A Man Must Live,* both rondeaus, and Edwin Arlington Robinson's *The House on the Hill,* a villanelle, being distinguished examples.

The Fixed Forms.—The purpose of this study is not primarily to trace the devious history of poetic forms; it is to furnish a living study of the living craft of poetry, as an aid to aspirants in the field. A quick backward look at the history of the chief of the fixed forms is in order;

for a detailed study of the slow divagations of these formal metric schemes the reader must be referred to a history of the forms.

Southern France, and especially the province of Provence, saw a flowering of verse in the hands of the *jongleurs* or troubadours, which held in it the germs of the later French forms. The culture was wiped out, in a series of religious crusades; but the germs of the poetic forms took root in northern France, especially under Charles d'Orleans and François Villon, and it was here that most of the forms received final shaping. The four hundred and sixty troubadours whose names have come down to us, with their anonymous kindred whose poems also persist, wrote in many forms which have disappeared. Oldest of these was the *vers,* consisting of eight-syllabled lines arranged in stanzas. From this grew the *canzo,* with interlaced rhymes, devoted to subjects of love and gallantry. The *sirvente,* with short stanzas, simply rhyming, and corresponding one to the other, treated, seriously or satirically, of political and social subjects. The *tenso* was an elaborate and curious duel in versification, with the first duellist improvising the first stanza, and his opponent replying in an identical form; later stanzas continuing identical in form, as first one of the poets, and then the other, strove for mastery in verse. The *alba,* a farewell at morning; the *serena,* an evening song; the *pastorella,* lauding pastoral subjects; the *breu-doble,* a little form with three rhymes, two of which are repeated twice in three four-lined stanzas, and given once in a concluding couplet, and the third finishing each

quatrain; the *retroensa,* with a more extended refrain,—all of these are vanished from our modern practice. Only the most elaborate of all, the intricate *sestina,* has survived in diluted favor.

The chief theme was love, in the sense of lady-worship, largely illicit, and largely hopeless. This dialog of Aimeric de Pegulhan indicates the mood:

"Lady, for you great torment must I bear."
"Sir, you are foolish, for I do not care."
"Lady, for heaven's sake to me be kind."
"Sir, quite in vain your empty prayers you'll find."
"Good lady, I do love you faithfully."
"Good sir, and I dislike you utterly."
"Lady, my heart is therefore in distress."
"Sir, mine is ever light with happiness."

So it proceeded; with Love promising a happy ending:

"Love, may I hope my happiness to gain?"
"Friend, yes! at last, through service and through pain."

The foremost of the love-poets, Bernart de Ventadorn, sang in a mood as posedly chivalric as the humblest, as this stanza evidences:

She whom I love with faithful mind
  Is best and fairest, yet my eyes
  Are filled with tears, my heart with sighs;
Too much I love—my hurt I find.
Helpless, love takes me prisoner,
  And in his prison I must sit;
  No key but pity opens it,
And pity is not found in her.

Bertran de Born was the flower of the warlike singers, as is attested by this stanza from his vigorous *sirventesc* written, probably, when Richard of England and Alfonso of Castile were about to unite against the King of France:

If honor and if courage do not melt
From the two kings, we soon shall see the fields
With fragments strewn of swords and helms and shields
And men cut through the body to the belt;
In fury we shall see steeds charging past,
And many a lance through bosom and through thigh,
And joy and tears, moan and exultant cry:
Vast is the loss, the gain surpassing vast.

And then in northern France the *ballades* and other forms began to appear. The Royal French Library holds its thousands of them in manuscript. Eustache Deschamps, a friend of Chaucer's, left no less than 1,175 ballades. Froissart the chronicler wrote many. Charles d'Orleans is hailed as the early master of the roundel, just as the vagabond Villon is lauded as the prince of ballade-makers. Jean Passerat, in the sixteenth century, gave the villanelle its present form; Voiture, in the next century, stabilized the rondeau. There have been constant revivals of the forms in France. Chaucer wrote approximations of the forms, and Gower, his uninspired English contemporary, presented to Henry IV at his coronation fifty ballades; but these were written in French. To the contrary Charles d'Orleans, during his quarter century's captivity in England, wrote rondels in the adopted language. Patrick Carey published in the mid-seventeenth century a series of sober

religious triolets; and there have been repeated revivals of interest in the over-artificialized forms since.

On the Rules of the Various Forms.—France permits the use of rhyme words of exactly the same form and spelling, providing the meaning of the words is distinct: as *Ruth,* the girl, and *ruth,* meaning pity; or *bear,* the animal, and *bear,* to support. This is forbidden in English. In using the forms, it is not even permissible in English to rhyme any identities, no matter how the spelling differs; thus *sail* and *sale, bear* and *bare, claim* and *disclaim, prove, approve,* and *reprove, facility* and *imbecility,* are not permissible rhymes. This is, of course, a rule of all correct rhyming in English.

But the rhyme rule in the fixed forms is far stricter than this, and proceeds:

> No syllable once used as a rhyme can be used again in the same poem as a rhyme, not even if it be spelt differently with the same sound; nor if the whole word is altered by a prefix. The syllable that rhymes must always be a new one in both sense and sound.

Some liberties are taken by slipshod versifiers; but if, for instance, in the long stretch of a chant royal, you descend to rhyming *claim* and *reclaim,* at least have them as far apart as possible in your rhyme scheme. To any purist in versification they are unforgivable slips.

The use of the refrain brings in further strictness. It is not a meaningless repetition of sounds, which may or may not further the context or meaning of the passage, as in English ballads. It must in every case aid in the progress

of the thought, come in naturally, and be repeated, without any change, in all of its sounds. Again, slipshod versifiers alter it slightly, by using at will an *and* for a *but,* a *then* for an *if;* but this violates the proper strictness of the form of the refrain. Still, any change in the meaning that may be accomplished by a change of punctuation, or even of spelling, providing the sound is unchanged, is permissible, and even desirable, especially in light verse. Thus *It's meet, this sale,* as a refrain, could reappear as, *Its meat, this sail,* provided the sense progression justified it. The refrain must be repeated strictly, as to its every sound—though punctuation and spelling may be changed; and, except for the refrain, no rhyming sound can ever be repeated, during the whole course of the poem, These are the two major rules to be kept in mind.

The Ballade Family—There are two standard forms of the ballade. The first consists of three stanzas of eight lines each, followed by a concluding verse, known as the *envoy;* each of the stanzas, and the envoy, closing with a line called the *refrain.* The rhyme scheme is a, b, a, b, b, c, b, C (the capitalized *C* being the refrain) for each stanza, and b, c, b, C for the envoy. Do not forget the rules for writing the form:

1. The same set of rhymes used in the first stanza, in the same order, must be used in each stanza, and the last half of this scheme must be used in the envoy.
2. No rhyme-sound (word or syllable) once used as a rhyme may be used for that purpose in the whole length of the poem.
3. Each stanza and the envoy must close with the refrain line,

repeated without any alteration of sound. The sense of the refrain must be supreme throughout the ballade, the culminating line being brought in always without effort as the natural close of the stanza.

Once the length of the refrain was held to govern the length of the stanza. Thus an eight-syllabled refrain dictated an eight-line stanza, a ten-syllabled refrain a ten-line stanza. But this puristic extremity is not universally followed.

4. The stanza should carry an unbroken sense throughout, and not be split in meaning into two four-line stanzas, or any similar division. The needful pauses for punctuation are allowed, but the sense is not to be finished midway of the stanza.

5. The envoy, used in both ballade and chant royal, was at first addressed to the patron of the poet. It is thus usual to commence it with some such invocation as *Prince! Princess! Sire!* or some mythical or symbolic person so introduced; but this is at times omitted. The envoy is properly both a dedication and a culmination, and should be richer in wording and more stately in imagery than the preceding lines.

A well-wrought ballade is W. E. Henley's *Ballade of Dead Actors:*

Where are the passions they essayed, (*a*)
  And where the tears they made to flow? (*b*)
Where the wild humours they portrayed (*a*)
  For laughing worlds to see and know? (*b*)
  Othello's wrath and Juliet's woe? (*b*)
Sir Peter's whims and Timon's gall? (*c*)
  And Millamant and Romeo? (*b*)
Into the night go one and all. (*C*)

Where are the braveries, fresh or frayed? (*a*)
The plumes, the armours—friend and foe? (*b*)
The cloth of gold, the rare brocade, (*a*)
The mantles glittering to and fro? (*b*)
The pomp, the pride, the royal show? (*b*)
The cries of war and festival? (*c*)
The youth, the grace, the charm, the glow? (*b*)
Into the night go one and all. (*C*)

The curtain falls, the play is played: (*a*)
The Beggar packs beside the Beau; (*b*)
The Monarch troops, and troops the Maid; (*a*)
The Thunder huddles with the Snow. (*b*)
Where are the revellers high and low? (*b*)
The clashing swords? The lover's call? (*c*)
The dancers gleaming row on row? (*b*)
Into the night go one and all. (*C*)

Prince, in one common overthrow (*b*)
The Hero tumbles with the Thrall; (*c*)
As dust that drives, as straws that blow, (*b*)
Into the night go one and all. (*C*)

Of the five requirements, let us consider the first and second, dealing with rhyme, together. A ballade requires six different rhymes on the *a* rhyme sound. Henley uses *essayed, portrayed, frayed, brocade, played, maid.* These are the *-ade* sound, prefaced by the consonantal sounds *s, tr, fr, br, pl,* and *m.* A ballade requires fourteen different rhymes on the *b* rhyme sound. Henley uses *flow, know, woe, Romeo, foe, fro, show, glow, beau, snow, low, row, throw,* and *blow.* These are the long *-o* sound, pref-

aced by the consonantal sounds *fl, n, w,* nothing (the pure vowel, the last syllable in *Romeo*), *f, fr, sh, gl, b, sn, l, r, thr,* and *bl:* fourteen sounds, all different. A ballade requires five different rhymes on the *c* sound, one of which is the refrain rhyme. Henley uses *gall, festival, call, thrall,* and the refrain terminant *all.* These are the *-all* sound, prefaced by the consonantal sounds *g, v, c, thr,* and, in the refrain, nothing (the pure vowel sound which opens *all.*) Thus his rhyming is correct throughout.

The refrain line is used without any alteration of any kind, satisfying the third requirement. In spite of the punctuation breaks, the progress of thought is unbroken throughout, satisfying the fourth requirement, and, lastly, the envoy is addressed to *"Prince,"* and is adequate as a culumination to the whole. This, then, is a perfect specimen of the ballade. The fifth, ninth, twelfth and twenty-first lines have nine syllables each, each of these lines having the addition of a grace-note, an extra unaccented syllable; the rest have eight syllables to the line. The movement is predominantly iambic, with an occasional substituted trochee, or, in the case of the grace-notes, an anapest. All of this is entirely permissible.

Is this poetry, or not? It is for each critic—each reader or listener—to decide that for himself, after understanding what is poetry. The theme is the passing of all things—surely a serious theme. But the form is intentionally quaint, repetitive. Such a line as,

The Thunder huddles with the Snow

is, to me, distinctly poetic, in the highest sense. And yet the whole has the aroma of light verse, of unstartling thoughts expressed daintily, rather than with a stab of heart-sent music. And light verse, humorous verse, dialect verse, are in general not classed as poetry, but as verse. They appeal to emotions, but not to the highest. It is best to follow this distinction, and say that this ballade is admirable light verse, but not poetry. There is no error in coming to the opposite conclusion, if the ballade moves you differently.

Andrew Lang's delightful *Ballade of Primitive Man* has a predominantly anapestic movement, three feet to the line, with eight or nine syllables to the line:

He lived in a cave by the seas,
  He lived upon oysters and foes,
But his list of forbidden degrees
  An extensive morality shows;
  Geological evidence goes
To prove he had never a pan,
  But he shaved with a shell when he chose,
'Twas the manner of Primitive Man.

He worshipped the rain and the breeze
  He worshipped the river that flows,
And the Dawn, and the Moon, and the trees,
  And bogies, and serpents, and crows;
  He buried his dead with their toes
Tucked up, an original plan.
  Till their knees came right under their nose,
'Twas the manner of Primitive Man.

His communal wives, at his ease,
  He would curb with occasional blows;
Or his State had a queen, like the bees
  (As another philosopher trows):
  When he spoke it was never in prose,
But he sang in a strain that would scan,
  For (to doubt it, perchance, were morose)
'Twas the manner of Primitive Man.

Envoy

  Max, proudly your Aryans pose,
But their rigs they undoubtedly ran,
  For, as every Darwinian knows,
'Twas the manner of Primitive Man!

The invocation, to the philologist Max Muller, is properly put. But *nose,* line 15, is identical with *knows,* line twenty-seven; and *morose* is pronounced with an *s* sound, not a *z* sound, so that it does not properly rhyme with *foes* (pronounced foze) and the rest. Hence this ballade falls down twice technically. And if a master fails, how are neophytes to be sure they are correct? Is there any method of testing the rhymes, during the progress of the construction of the verses?

There is; and it may here be shared. Here is the opening of a delightful ballade by Austin Dobson, with three feet, anapestic, of only seven syllables to the line. And, in addition to the rhyme scheme, we place to the right an analysis of the opening consonantal sounds on each rhyme, so that, as we write, the thing would appear:

		a-rhymes, -ite	b-rhymes, -oo	c-rhymes -an
Chicken-skin, delicate, white	(*a*)	wh		
Painted by Carlo Vanloo,	(*b*)		l	
Loves in a riot of light	(*a*)	l		
Roses and vaporous blue;	(*b*)		bl	
Hark to the dainty *frou-frou!*	(*b*)		fr	
Picture above, if you can,	(*c*)			c (k)
Eyes that could melt as the dew,—	(*b*)		d	
This was the Pompadour's fan.	(*C*)			f
See how they rise at the sight		s		
Thronging the *Oeil de Boeuf* through,			thr	
Courtiers as butterflies bright,		br		
Beauties that Fragonard drew,			dr	
Talon-rouge, falbala, queue,			qu	
Cardinal, Duke,—to a man,				m
Eager to sigh or to sue,—			s	
This was the Pompadour's fan!				f
Ah! but things more than polite		l		
Hung on this toy, *voyez vous!*			v	
Matters of state and of might,		m		
Things that great ministers do;			d	
Things that, maybe, overthrew			thr	
Those in whose brains they began;			g	
Here was the sign and the cue,—		c (k)		
This was the Pompadour's fan!			f	
Envoy				
Where are the secrets it knew?			n	
Weavings of plot and of plan?				pl
—But where is the Pompadour, too?			t	
This was the Pompadour's *Fan!*				f

Alas, in the *a* rhyme column, we spot at once the identities in the third and seventeenth line, *light* and *polite;* among the *b* rhymes, the identities in lines seven and twenty, *do* and *dew* (unless the defense is that the first is pronounced *d-oo,* and the second *d-yoo,* which is a rather slim defense, although accurate as far as pronunciation goes) and in lines ten and twenty-one, *through* and *overthrew.* The *c* rhymes are correct.

But the three failings are unforgivable in English, if acceptable in French; and they could have been easily eliminated. It is clear that, in choosing the sounds to be rhymed in a ballade, the *a* sound must be a sound capable of at least six rhymes without straining; the *b* sounds, of fourteen—a large number, in English, with its paucity of rhymes; and the *c* sounds, five. You may object that it is impossible to carry a rhyming dictionary around with you. The answer to this is simple: you can construct your own rhyming dictionary at a moment's notice, elaborate enough even for that most elaborate of rhymed forms, a chant royal—a rhyming dictionary that you can throw away when you have finished with the verse. Here is the method. Write down all the possible consonantal sounds:

Nothing			
B	B	L or R	CH
C (S)	C (K)		SH
C (K)	F		SHR

D	G		
F	S	L	TW
G	SP	or	BW
H	SC (SK)	R	DW
J			GW
M			PW
N	D		
P	T	R	TH (thin)
Q	ST		TH (this)
R			THR
S			
T	SC (SK)		ZL
V	SL		
W	SM		ZH (as in negligee)
X	SN		
Y	SP		
Z	SQU		
	ST		
	SW		
	SV		

This is fairly complete; you may be able to add to it. Now test the rhyme sound desired against this table, and list all possible rhymes with the sound chosen. Thus your test of the long *a* sound would give:

A, aye; bay, obey; say; decay; day; fay, gay, hay, jay, may, nay, pay, ray, way, yea

And you have only used the single consonants. You go on, using both *bl* and *br, cl* and *cr, fl* and *fr,* and so on:

> bray, clay, flay, fray, gray, play, pray, splay, spray, dray, tray, stray, slay, dismay, stay, sway, shay, they

Again, this may not be complete; but it has given us more than thirty possible rhymes, and even the chant royal demands at most nineteen on any rhymed sound.

Yet you need three rhymes for the ballade; let us test two other words. Let us try the word *huge:*

> huge; febrifuge, subterfuge, vermifuge

This clearly will not do as a ballade rhyme; there are only two rhymed sounds, and our minimum is five. Let us try *ounce:*

> ounce, bounce, denounce, pounce, flounce, trounce

Here we have six in this spelling, and also

> counts and accounts; amounts, mounts, dismounts *and* surmounts; founts

This gives nine sounds: not enough to use as the internal rhyme *b* but sufficient for *a* or *c.*

Let us try a double rhyme, *ended.* Going down the table of consonantal sounds, we get:

> ended; bended; fended, defended; Jen did; mended, amended; depended; rended; tended, attended; vended; wended; blended; friended, befriended; splendid; trended; spended, expended; extended (the *st* sound); then did, *and all similar words, as* men did, *and other rhyme sounds already listed*

We have at least eighteen rhymes, and can proceed accordingly.

This is invaluable, where the mood is to write a ballade, chant royal, or even a rondeau; and, in fact, any stanza in light verse requiring an extended rhyme scheme. It may aid in the construction of sonnets, patricularly of the Italian type, where two sounds must have at least four rhymes each. In general, my own practice is to use my rhyming dictionary (or this home-made device) in writing light verse; but in writing serious verse which I hope will be poetry, I ordinarily do without it. Other versifiers use it, even in serious verse.

No matter how excellent your rhyming dictionary, you will at times find rhyming words omitted. It is invaluable to write such words in, when you find them; they may come in handy. Moreover, especially in light verse, as we shall see later, the use of such a table, either written down or kept in the mind, will suggest new and original rhymes, based upon two or more words. Thus *ended* rhymes with the whole group *men did, pen did,* and so on. Among the novel rhymes found in one extended piece of light verse are:

> clubs, Henry Dubbs; taxis, Maxies; Duluth, truth; Kalamazoo, dew, etc.; Vega, intrigue a; bluster, thrust her, fussed her; if, tiff, diff, the "wif"; sequins, clique wins; chronicle, Babylonical; exactly, matter-of-factly; churches, researches, Galli-Curci's; as, jazz; spank, hank; rhyming, Bodenheiming

Some of these are composed of made words, of slang, of

two words; they are all effective, in light verse. Here are rhyming pairs made more strangely:

village,
illeg-
Itimate.

We will encounter much more of this, when we come to the rhyming devices of the masters of light verse. One of the things to keep in mind, in writing light verse, is that one way of escaping novelty in rhyming is to discover these new and unused rhyming combinations.

The second standard form of the ballade consists of stanzas of ten lines, usually of ten syllables each, as in the five-foot iambic pattern; followed by an envoy of five lines. The regular rhyme scheme for each stanza is a, b, a, b, b, c, c, d, c, D; the envoy being rhymed c, c, d, c, D. Rather than quote the whole of such a ballad, it will be enough to our purpose to quote the opening stanza and the envoy of one, this being Swinburne's rendition of Villon's *Epitaph in Form of a Ballade:*

Men, brother men, that after us yet live, (*a*)
Let not your hearts too hard against us be; (*b*)
For if some pity of us poor men ye give, (*a*)
The sooner God shall take of you pity. (*b*)
Here are we five or six strung up, you see, (*b*)
And here the flesh that all too well we fed (*c*)
Bit by bit eaten and rotten, rent and shred, (*c*)
And we the bones grow dust and ash withal; (*d*)
Let no man laugh at us discomforted, (*c*)
But pray to God that he forgive us all. . . . (*D*)

Prince Jesus, that of all art lord and head, (*c*)
Keep us, that hell be not our bitter bed; (*c*)
We have naught to do in such a master's hall. (*d*)
Be not ye therefore of our fellowhead, (*c*)
But pray to God that he forgive us all. (*D*)

The rhymes in the first and fourth lines of the envoy, *head* and *fellowhead,* are identities, and hence not correct rhyming. The language is not yet rich in this more extended form of the ballade; its more solemn movement is suited more to serious verse than to light verse, and yet the restrictions deter most poets from uttering their poetry in the form.

The *ballade with double refrain* uses two refrains, one occurring at the fourth line of every stanza, and one at the eighth; while, in the envoy, the refrains are the second and fourth lines respectively. The best technique selects two antithetical refrains, and develops each half-stanza upon the refrain used to close it. Austin Dobson's *The Ballade of Prose and Rhyme* is an excellent example:

When the roads are heavy with mire and rut,
In November fogs, in December snows,
When the North Wind howls, and the doors are shut,
There is place and enough for the pains of prose;—
But whenever a scent from the whitethorn blows,
And the jasmine-stars to the casement climb,
And a Rosalind-face at the lattice shows,
Then hey!—for the ripple of laughing rhyme!

When the brain gets dry as an empty nut,
When the reason stands on its squarest toes,

When the mind (like a beard) has a "formal cut,"
  There is place and enough for the pains of prose;—
  But whenever the May-blood stirs and glows,
And the young year draws to the "golden prime,"—
  And Sir Romeo sticks in his ear a rose,
Then hey!—for the ripple of laughing rhyme!

In a theme where the thoughts have a pedant strut,
  In a changing quarrel of "Ayes" and "Noes,"
In a starched procession of "If" and "But,"
  There is place and enough for the pains of prose;—
  But whenever a soft glance softer grows,
And the light hours dance to the trysting-time,
  And the secret is told "that no one knows,"
Then hey!—for the ripple of laughing rhyme!

Envoy

In a work-a-day world,—for its needs and woes,
There is place and enough for the pains of prose;
But whenever the May-bells clash and chime,.....
They hey!—for the ripple of laughing rhyme.

The rhyme scheme here is a, b, a, B; b, c, b, C for each of the three stanzas, and b, B, c, C, for the envoy, the capitals, *B* and *C,* indicating the two refrains.

The *double ballade* consists of six stanzas of eight or ten lines each, rhymed as in the two models already studied. Thus it may be six stanzas rhymed a, b, a, b, b, c, b, C; or six stanzas rhymed a, b, a, b, b, c, c, d, c, D. Ordinarily the envoy is lacking. Henley, however, a distinguished user of the form, always used an envoy. *His Double Ballade of Life and Fate* commenced and closed thus:

Fools may pine, and sots may swill,
Cynics jibe, and prophets rail,
Moralists may scourge and drill,
Preachers prose, and fainthearts quail.
Let them whine, or threat, or wail!
Till the touch of Circumstance
Down to darkness sink the scale,
Fate's a fiddler, Life's a dance. . . .

Envoy

Boys and girls, at slug and snail
And their kindred look askance.
Pay your footing on the nail:
Fate's a fiddler, Life's a dance.

He takes other liberties with the form. His *Double Ballade of the Nothingness of Things* has eleven lines to each stanza, rhymed a, b, a, b, b, c, c, d, e, d, E, and an envoy rhymed c, c, e, d, d, E. His *Ballade of Truisms* is a variant of the simple ballade, written in trochees, with the last unaccented syllable omitted. Each stanza has twelve lines, of the following number of feet: 4, 2, 4; 4, 2, 4; 4, 2, 4; 4, 2, 4. This is rhymed a, a, b, a, a, b, b, b, c, b, b, C. The envoy is 4, 2, 4, 4, 2, 4 feet to the lines, with a rhyme scheme b, b, c, b, b, C. He has invented and followed other variations, all of them pleasing ones. Swinburne has a ponderous movement in his *Ballade of Swimming,* one of the ten-line-to-the-stanza variety, with each line composed of seven anapests—that is, in this ample movement:

The sea is awake, and the sound of the song of the joy of her waking is rolled

From afar to the star that recedes from anear to the wastes of the
wide wild shore.

These are merely the first two lines. Thus many variations are made by the masters; and, once the type forms are mastered, the road to such variations is open. But the task of mastering even the simplest ballade is no light one; and the variations may well be left for the most mature metrical exercises.

The *chant royal* is accepted by most writers as the longest and most dignified form of the ballade, written with five verses of eleven lines each, and an envoy of five. It is the most difficult of the poetic forms arising in the North, as the sestina is the most difficult surviving from the Provençal forms. The rhyme order is usually a, b, a, b, c, c, d, d, e, d, E; the envoy, d, d, e, d, E. A briefer form had only ten lines to the stanza, and six in the envoy, having the stanzaic rhyme scheme a, b, a, b, b, c, c, d, c, D, and the envoy rhyme scheme of c, c, d, c, c, D. H. C. Bunner has achieved the most amusing chant royal, his being entitled *Behold the Deeds! (Being the Plaint of Adolphe Culpepper Ferguson, Salesman of Fancy Notions, held in durance of his Landlady for a failure to connect on Saturday night.*)

I would that all men my hard case might know;
How grievously I suffer for no sin:
I, Adolphe Culpepper Ferguson, for lo!
I, of my landlady am lockéd in,
For being short on this sad Saturday,
Nor having shekels of silver wherewith to pay;

She has turned and is departed with my key;
Wherefore, not even as other boarders free,
I sing (as prisoners to their dungeon stones
When for ten days they expiate a spree):
Behold the deeds that are done of Mrs. Jones!

One night and one day have I wept my woe;
Nor wot I when the morrow doth begin,
If I shall have to write to Briggs & Co.,
To pray them to advance the requisite tin
For ransom of their salesman, that he may
Go forth as other boarders go alway—
As those I hear now flocking from their tea,
Led by the daughter of my landlady
Piano-ward. This day, for all my moans,
Dry bread and water have been servéd me.
Behold the deeds that are done of Mrs. Jones!

Miss Amabel Jones is musical, and so
The heart of the young he-boardér doth win,
Playing "The Maiden's Prayer," *adagio*—
That fetcheth him, as fetcheth the banco skin
The innocent rustic. For my part, I pray:
That Badarjewska maid may wait for aye
Ere she sits with a lover, as did we
Once sit together, Amabel! Can it be
That all that arduous wooing not atones
For Saturday shortness of trade dollars three?
Behold the deeds that are done of Mrs. Jones!

Yea! she forgets the arm was wont to go
Around her waist. She wears a buckle whose pin
Galleth the crook of the young man's elbów;
I forget not, for I that youth have been.

Smith was aforetime the Lothario gay.
Yet once, I mind me, Smith was forced to stay
Close in his room. Not calm, as I, was he:
But his noise brought no pleasaunce, verily.
Small ease he gat of playing on the bones,
Or hammering on his stove-pipe, that I see.
Behold the deeds that are done of Mrs. Jones!

Thou, for whose fear the figurative crow
I eat, accursed be thou and all thy kin!
Thee will I shew up—yea, up will I shew
Thy too thick buckwheats, and thy tea too thin.
Ay! here I dare thee, ready for the fray!
Thou dost *not* "keep a first-class house," I say!
It does not with the advertisements agree.
Thou lodgest a Briton with a puggaree,
And thou hast harboured Jacobses and Cohns,
Also a Mulligan. Thus denounce I thee!
Behold the deeds that are done of Mrs. Jones!

Envoy

Boarders; the worst I have not told to ye:
She hath stolen my trousers, that I may not flee
Privily by the window. Hence these groans,
There is no fleeing in a *robe de nuit.*
Behold the deeds that are done of Mrs. Jones!

Here his stanza rhyme is a, b, a, b, c, c, d, d, e, d, E; with the envoy rhyme d, d, e, d, E. The rhyming throughout is exquisitely regular, and the product stands as a perfect chant royal. The form is highly intricate, and the method of checking the various rhyme sounds as they go down must be followed, to be sure that no rhyme sound is re-

peated. A great deal of reworking is necessary in perfecting such a form as this; and, in order to make the envoy the culmination of the verses, it is often necessary to shift the strongest and most vigorous rhyming sounds to it, and substitute other words in the various stanzas. A difficult metrical exercise: but the persistent man thrives on difficulty, and the product may be worth all the effort.

Chain Verse.—Chain verse in English is of many varieties. We have considered the simpler forms of rhyme-chains, as when a pattern of triplets is rhymed akin to terza rima: a, b, a; b, c, b; c, d, c; d, e, d; or such a chain of quatrains as a, a, b, a; b, b, c, b; c, c, d, c, and so on. Any similar pattern can be constructed up to such an elaborate device as a *chain of sonnets,* with the final rhyme in each repeated as the opening rhyme of the next.

There can be chain verse where the link is the final word in each line, as this opening stanza of an anonymous poem uses:

> Nerve thy soul with doctrines noble,
> Noble in the walks of time,
> Time that leads to an eternal,
> An eternal life sublime.

Here is a series of phrases similarly interlocked:

> The rarer seen, the less in mind,
> The less in mind, the lesser pain,
> The lesser pain, less grief I find,
> The lesser grief, the greater gain,
> The greater gain, the merrier I,
> Therefore I wish thy sight to fly.

These verses, by Barnaby Googe, tend to grow monotonous. There is more variety in this chain form of John Byrom's, where the fourth line of one quatrain becomes the first of the next:

My spirit longeth for Thee
Within my troubled breast,
Although I be unworthy
Of so divine a Guest.

Of so divine a Guest
Unworthy though I be,
Yet has my heart no rest,
Unless it comes from Thee.

Unless it comes from Thee,
In vain I look around,

and so on.

The Kyrielle.—There is the story of the very old lady, whose latter days were filled with delight, when she discovered what prose was, and that she had been talking it all her life. Many writers use the kyrielle without knowing they are using a definite form. It consists, in its perfect form, of quatrains each line consisting of eight syllables, each stanza having the last line the same. John Payne furnishes us with an excellent example, proceeding:

A little pain, a little pleasure,
A little heaping up of treasure,
Then no more gazing upon the sun.
All things must end that have begun.

Where is the time for hope or doubt?
A puff of the wind, and life is out;
A turn of the wheel, and the rest is won.
All things must end that have begun.

Golden morning and purple night,
Life that fails with the failing light;
Death is the only deathless one.
All things must end that have begun.

Here the eight-syllable pattern is broken constantly; and there is no essential sacredness in it. It is clear that this simple form must compensate by climax development from stanza to stanza, to justify itself.

The Pantoum.—The pantoum, of Malayan origin, was introduced into French by Ernest Fouinet, and popularized by Victor Hugo in the *Orientales.* Its construction is simple. It is written in four-line stanzas; and the second and fourth line of each stanza except the last become the first and third of the succeeding stanza. In the last stanza, the second and fourth lines are, respectively, the third and first of the first stanza; so that the first and last lines of the poem are identical. The rhyme scheme then would be: a, b, a, b; b, c, b, c; c, d, c, d . . . z, a, z, a. Here is the opening of one by Brander Matthews, with the innate monotony of the form utilized to phrase the monotony of his theme, *En Route:*

Here we are riding the rail,
  Gliding from out of the station;
Man though I am, I am pale,
  Certain of heat and vexation.

Gliding from out of the station,
  Out from the city we thrust;
Certain of heat and vexation,
  Sure to be covered with dust.

Out from the city we thrust:
  Rattling we run o'er the bridges:
Sure to be covered with dust,
  Stung by a thousand of midges.

Rattling we run o'er the bridges,
  Rushing we dash o'er the plain;
Stung by a thousand of midges,
  Certain precursors of rain.

Rushing we dash o'er the plain,
  Watching the clouds darkly lowering,
Certain precursors of rain:
  Fields about here need a showering. . . .

to the conclusion,

Ears are on edge at the rattle,
  Man though I am, I am pale,
Sounds like the noise of a battle,
  Here we are riding the rail.

The Triolet.—The triolet is the earliest of the rondeau family to appear. The first ones known are in the *Cléomadés* of Adenèz-le-Roi, who wrote in the late thirteenth century. Speaking at first in ten-syllabled lines, it dealt with grave subjects; but the last few centuries have seen its themes lighten, and its form shorten to eight-syllabled and even six-syllabled lines. Its form consists of eight

lines, with two rhymes. The first line is repeated as the fourth lines; the first two lines reappear as the seventh and eighth. Thus there are only five different lines in the whole form. The rhyme scheme is A, B, a, A, a, b, A, B, with the repeated lines represented by the capitals A and B. The refrain comes in so hastily, and is so lengthy in comparison with the poem, that all of the versifier's skill is needed to avoid monotony. In this serious-mooded example by H. C. Bunner,

A pitcher of mignonette (*A*)
In a tenement's highest casement; (*B*)
Queer sort of a flower-pot—yet (*a*)
That pitcher of mignonette (*A*)
Is a garden of heaven set (*a*)
To the little sick child in the basement, (*b*)
The pitcher of mignonette (*A*)
In the tenement's highest casement. (*B*)

This is more effective than most triolets, as poetry; and yet it is a Horrible Example in its treatment of the refrain. For we have "*A* pitcher of mignonette," "*That* pitcher of mignonette," and "*The* pitcher of mignonette"; and we also have "In *a* tenement's highest casement" and "In *the* tenement's highest casement." In other words, every possible line that could have a mistake (in the sense of an altered refrain line) contains such a mistake. Yet Bunner may have achieved his result, and be forgiven for the effect of the brief poem: where, in a similar subsequent instance, another rhymer may be indicted by the critical Grand Jury and serve years and years of deprecia-

tion for similar slips. The triolet may be used (as it was used long ago) as a stanza form, as well as an independent poem. Its most constant use is as flippant as this example of Henley's:

> Easy is the Triolet,
> If you really learn to make it!
> Once a neat refrain you get,
> Easy is the Triolet.
> As you see!—I pay my debt
> With another rhyme. Deuce take it,
> Easy is the Triolet,
> If you really learn to make it.

The Rondel, Rondeau, and Roundel.—This group of fixed forms derives from the triolet seed; and only in modern times has there been agreement as to the fixity of the forms. The *rondel*, an old form of the later word *rondeau*, arising in all probability in Provence, appears in the fourteenth century verse of northern France in the writings of Froissart, Deschamps, and others. In its origin the rondel was a lyric of two stanzas, each having four or five lines only, and rhyming on two sounds, and with exactly the same repetition of lines as in the triolet; thus it was, in our eyes, either a triolet, or a ten-line variant of the triolet. With Charles d'Orleans the rondel took the distinct form now assigned to it, of fourteen lines on two rhymes, the first two lines reappearing as the seventh and eighth, and for the final couplet. This double repetition of the couplet refrain made the form unwieldy, and later French shortened the form to thirteen lines, omitting the second line

of the original couplet at the end. Thus the form with Charles d'Orleans appears in this rondel by Cosmo Monkhouse, *To a Blank Sheet of Paper:*

Paper, inviolate, white, (*A*)
Shall it be joy or pain? (*B*)
Shall I of fate complain, (*b*)
Or shall I laugh tonight? (*a*)

Shall it be hopes that are bright? (*a*)
Shall it be hopes that are vain? (*b*)
Paper, inviolate, white, (*A*)
Shall it be joy or pain? (*B*)

A dear little hand so light, (*a*)
A moment in mine hath lain; (*b*)
Kind was its pressure again— (*b*)
Ah, but it was so slight! (*a*)

Paper, inviolate, white, (*A*)
Shall it be joy or pain? (*B*)

This rondel, *Before the Dawn,* by Samuel Minturn Peck, is in the preferred modern pattern:

Before the dawn begins to glow, (*A*)
A ghostly company I keep; (*B*)
Across the silent room they creep, (*b*)
The buried forms of friend and foe. (*a*)
Amid the throng that come and go, (*a*)
There are two eyes that make me weep; (*b*)
Before the dawn begins to glow, (*A*)
A ghostly company I keep. (*B*)

Two dear dead eyes. I love them so! (*a*)
They shine like starlight on the deep, (*b*)
And often when I am asleep (*b*)
They stoop and kiss me, bending low, (*a*)
Before the dawn begins to glow. (*A*)

The form used by d'Orleans has, as its rhyme and refrain scheme, A, B, b, a; a, b, A, B; a, b, b, a, A, B. The more modern form follows: A, B, b, a; a, b, A, B; a, b, b, a, A. You have the twain to choose from.

The *rondeau* is, next to the ballade, the most popular of all French forms. Voiture, in the seventeenth century, revived it in France, and used it with consummate dexterity. It is written throughout on two rhymes, being composed of fifteen lines—thirteen of the full length, with two unrhymed refrains. The refrain usually consists of the first half of the first line, but is often restricted to the first word only. Its fifteen lines are grouped in three stanzas, the first of five lines, the second of three lines and the refrain, the third of five lines and the refrain. With R representing the refrain, the scheme then is, a, a, b, b, a; a, a, b, R; a, a, b, b, a, R.

A rondeau that is also a poem is *A Man Must Live,* by Charlotte Perkins Gilman, the brilliant American feminist:

A man must live. We justify (*a*)
Low shift and trick to treason high, (*a*)
A little vote for a little gold (*b*)
To a whole senate bought and sold (*b*)
By that self-evident reply. (*a*)

But is it so? Pray tell me why (*a*)
Life at such cost you have to buy? (*a*)
In what religion were you told (*b*)
A man must live? (*R*)

There are times when a man must die. (*a*)
Imagine, for a battle-cry, (*a*)
From soldiers, with a sword to hold,— (*b*)
From soldiers, with the flag unrolled,— (*b*)
This coward's whine, this liar's lie,— (*a*)
A man must live! (*R*)

It is such verse as this, written in a stiff fixed form, and lifting above that form to genuine poetry (in this reader's eyes, at any rate) that justifies all the time that may be spent with the rigid forms. The form is infinitely varied and graceful, even the refrain coming after an *a* rhyme in one instance, and after a *b* rhyme in the other.

A skilled light use of the same form appears in *A Song to One,* by T. A. Daly:

If few are won to read my lays
And offer me a word of praise,
If there are only one or two
To take my rhymes and read them through,
I may not claim the poet's bays.

I care not, when my Fancy plays
Its one sweet note, if it should raise
A host of listeners or few—
If you are one.

The homage that my full heart pays
To Womanhood in divers ways,
  Begins and ends, my love, in you.
  My lines may halt, but strong and true
My soul shall sing through all its days,
    If you are won.

The refrain here plays upon three variations of the identical sounds, "If few are won," "If you are one," "If you are won." In a rondeau by Michael Lewis, to preserve the pseudonym's sheer mask, the refrain ranges from "My lady's eyes" to "My lady sighs" and "My lady's size." As Louis Untermeyer points out, in his astonishing *The Forms of Poetry,* similar plays could be made upon:

Immortal eyes; immortal lies; immortalize.
Cum tu, Lydia; Come to Lydia; Come to! Lydia.

The *roundel,* based upon rare early French variants, is chiefly associated with the name of Swinburne, due to his volume *A Century of Roundels,* containing a hundred assorted examples of the form, the line-length ranging from four to sixteen syllables. As used by Swinburne, the roundel consists of eleven lines, two of which are the briefer refrain lines. The refrain either consists of the opening word of line one, or of half or some portion of that line; and, if it consists of more than one word, it is usually rhymed with the *b* rhyme sound in line two. The rhyme and refrain scheme is: a, b, a, R; b, a, b; a, b, a, R. Where the refrain rhymes, this could be phrased a, b, a, B; b, a, b; a, b, a, B. A typical example is Swinburne's *The Roundel:*

A roundel is wrought as a ring or a star-bright sphere,
With craft of delight and with cunning of sound unsought,
That the heart of the hearer may smile if to pleasure his ear
A roundel is wrought.

Its jewel of music is carven of all or of aught—
Love, laughter or mourning—remembrance of rapture or fear—
That fashion may fancy to hang in the ear of thought.

As a bird's quick song runs round, and the hearts in us hear
Pause answer to pause, and again the same strain caught,
So moves the device whence, round as a pearl or tear,
A roundel is wrought.

The *rondelet* is a seven-line fixed form, normally of four eight-syllabled lines, and three, the refrain lines, with four syllables. The scheme is, A, b, A, a, b, b, A (*A* again standing for the refrain brief line). An example by May Probyn is:

"Which way he went?"
I know not—how should I go spy
Which way he went?
I only know him gone. "Relent?"
He never will—unless I die!
And then, what will it signify
Which way he went?

The *rondeau redoublé,* an admirable remote relative of the rondeau, is twenty-five lines long. It has five quatrains, and a concluding stanza of four lines and a refrain, composed of the first half of line one. Moreover, the terminal lines of stanzas two, three, four, and five, are, in proper

sequence, the four lines of stanza one. Thus the rhyme scheme is a, b, a, b for stanza one; and, since stanza two must end with the first line of stanza one, rhymed *a,* the rhyme scheme of stanza two is b, a, b, a; and so these two patterns alternate until the conclusion. The whole scheme, using a–1 for line 1 of stanza one, b–2 for line two, and so on, would then be: a–1, b–2, a–3, c–4; b, a, b, a–1; a, b, a, b–2; b, a, b, a–3; a, b, a, b–4; b, a, b, a, R. The four divisions of the poem are, the first quatrain, the text; the next four quatrains, developing the text line by line; and the last stanza, the conclusion. An example is this *Mainly About Me,* by one of the regular contributors to the newspaper columns:

Though I am not a bloated millionaire, (*a*–1)
Though I'm no blooming Andy or Johndee, (*b*–2)
Though I have scarce a jitney-piece to spare, (*a*–3)
Life as a whole goes very well with me. (*b*–4)

Imprimis, I am healthy as can be, (*b*)
With appetite that is distinctly there. (*a*)
My meals? Each day I put away my three, (*b*)
Though I am not a bloated millionaire. (*a*–1)

Secundis, when it comes to what I wear, (*a*)
Sport shirts, Palm Beach—like any Christmas tree (*b*)
I shine, and cut a figure anywhere, (*a*)
Though I'm no blooming Andy or Johndee. (*b*–2)

I write with pen unbought (so far) and free (*b*)
Stuff that at times makes Proper People swear, (*a*)
And get it printed rather frequently,— (*b*)
Though I have scarce a jitney-piece to spare. (*a*–3)

"A daughter of the gods, divinely fair" (*a*)
Said "Yes, sir" to my heart's impassioned plea; (*b*)
We make a loving—and a handsome—pair; (*a*)
Life as a whole goes very well with me. (*b*–4)

I seem so needful to Society, (*b*)
So high-removed from Plute and Proletaire, (*a*)
That you may think a Superman you see,— (*b*)
That I'm the Cosmic Kid, the Ages' Heir,— (*a*)
Though I am not. (R)

This is an adequate model in every way, in a form deserving more popularity than it has yet received.

The *glose,* which is superficially a freer variant of the foregoing pattern, derives apparently from a different source, and is found more often in Spanish and Portuguese verse than in French. It begins, like the rondeau redoublé, with a quatrain, here called the *texte,* often a quotation from some former poet. This text the glose proceeds to develop, in four stanzas of ten lines each, closing each, as in the last form described, with one line of the text in the original order. The final refrain used in the rondeau redoublé, and indeed the whole concluding stanza of the other form, is omitted here. As to rhyming, each stanza has its sixth, ninth, and tenth (the refrain) line rhyming on the same sound; but the rest of the rhyme scheme differs with different users of the form. Here is one of the few written in English, *Rags and Dreams,* by Alan Dubois, taking its text from one of the most poignant songs in Mother Goose:

"If I'd as much money as I could tell, (*a*–1)
I never would cry old clothes to sell, (*a*–2)
Old clothes to sell, old clothes to sell, (*a*–3)
I never would cry old clothes to sell." (*a*–4)

The flow of my dreams is at youth's high flood, (*b*)
  A spring flood, freighted with strange and new (*c*)
Wonders of stars, and a touch of mud; (*b*)
For all things are sweet to youth's wild blood. (*b*)
  And fire-shod visions come to me too (*c*)
Of a people hungry for stars as well,— (*a*)
  Hungry for fare that the mangered few (*c*)
  Grasp and hoard; there's a world to do,— (*c*)
Hunger and darkness I could dispel, (*a*)
If I'd as much money as I could tell. (*a*–1)

But whether or no, it matters not; (*d*)
  I am caught in the mire as well as they; (*e*)
I am bound to squirm in a bitter spot (*d*)
Where blindness grows, and high dreams rot; (*d*)
  I coin my visions, to make them pay; (*e*)
I traffic in things that decay and smell, (*a*)
  Stopping my ears to the call of gay (*e*)
  Life, and the words that the visions say: (*e*)
Ah, if I had the heart to rebel, (*a*)
I never would cry old clothes to sell! (*a*–2)

But here I stay, and here I stay,
  And life is only a bitter jest
That a madman dreamed, and idiots play;
Tossing each precious thing away,
  Crowning the lowest, strangling the best;

And death will come ringing his pedlar's bell
  And gather the breath out of the breast,
  Calling our fairest and loveliest
Visions, but rags that shrink and swell,—
Old clothes to sell, old clothes to sell. (*a*–3)

Well, I can call as well as he—
  And these dreams he despises so
I say will sooner or later be
Not dreams, but fair reality;
  In dreams and rags and mud will flow
The dreamer's passion, the will's hard spell;
  And very death will change, and glow
  With life; we will reap the dreams we sow;
And then, from earth or heaven or hell,
I never would cry old clothes to sell. (*a*–4)

The stanza unit of this complicated scheme is b, c, b, b, c, a, c, c, a, a–1. In this example, each stanza has only three rhymes; but, with the exception of the rhyme dictated by the text, *a* in this instance, there is no rhyming identity in the rhymed sounds of the various stanzas. Since this is the norm of the above development, it is a fault to repeat, in the third developed stanza, the rhyme sound *ay,* which appears as rhyme *e* in the second developed stanza. Unless each stanza carries on the rhyme in this fashion, there is no gain in having one of them do so. Another point is that the text may follow any quatrain rhyming, as, a, b, a, b; a, b, b, a. In such cases, the sixth, ninth, and tenth (the refrain) line in each stanza will follow the appropriate refrain line, whether it be *a* or *b;* and stanza one of the

development of the text will begin with a rhyme sound we must name *c*. It is possible, of course, to repeat the identical rhyming sounds in the same order in each stanza, unless the refrain line dictates otherwise; in which case development stanzas one and three would be identical, and two and four identical, if the text were rhymed a, b, a, b. Thus you could have the whole scheme, a–1, b–2, a–3, b–4; c, d, c, c, d, a, c, c, a, a–1; c, d, c, c, d, b, c, c, b, b–2; c, d, c, c, d, a, c, c, a, a–3; and c, d, c, c, d, b, c, c, b, b–4. But this is not required, and other variants in the stanza rhyming are permitted, so long as lines 6, 9, and 10 have the rhyme demanded by the refrain line.

The Sestina.—The sestina, the Everest of Provençal versified ingenuity, was invented by the troubadour Arnaut Daniel at the close of the thirteenth century. In France it has had a slim popularity, and its gratified use by Dante and Petrarch give it an added fame. Here are the rules of the poem, as written by the originator and followers in Italy, Spain, and Portugal:

1. The sestina has six stanzas, each of six lines, of the same length; and a concluding three-line stanza.

2. The lines of the six stanzas end with the same six words, not rhyming with each other; these end words are chosen exclusively from two-syllabled nouns.

3. The arrangement of these six terminal words follows a regular law, very complex in ancient times, and altered toward simplicity later, as appears hereafter.

4. The closing three-line stanza uses the six terminal words, three at the end of its lines, three in their centres.

Modern usage permits the variation of allowing the terminal words to rhyme, using either two rhymes (as Swinburne does) or three rhymes. In any case, the six terminal words must repeat, unchanged in sound and spelling, through each succeeding stanza. The first verse has, of course, the initial order 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, for these six terminal words; the second, 6, 1, 5, 2, 4, 3; the third, 3, 6, 4, 1, 2, 5; the fourth, 5, 3, 2, 6, 1, 4; the fifth, 4, 5, 1, 3, 6, 2; the sixth, 2, 4, 6, 5, 3, 1; the last half-stanza ends with 2, 4, 6 and uses 1, 3, 5 at the beginning, (not always as the first word) of the lines, or at the half-line in rhymes that permit their introduction there. Thus no end-word occurs more than once in the same place; and the end-word of every stanza is chosen to take its place as the first terminal word in the next succeeding stanza. Here is a sestina, *Homes,* by Charlotte Perkins Gilman:

We are the smiling comfortable homes (1)
With happy families enthroned therein, (2)
Where baby souls are brought to meet the world, (3)
Where women end their duties and desires, (4)
For which men labor as the goal of life, (5)
That people worship now instead of God. (6)

Do we not teach the child to worship God?— (6)
Whose soul's young range is bounded by the homes (1)
Of those he loves, and where he learns that life (5)
Is all constrained to serve the wants therein, (2)
Domestic needs and personal desires,— (4)
These are the early limits of his world. (3)

And are we not the woman's perfect world, (3)
Prescribed by nature and ordained of God, (6)
Beyond which she can have no right desires, (4)
No need for service other than in homes? (1)
For doth she not bring up her young therein? (2)
And is not rearing young the end of life? (5)

And man? What other need hath he in life (5)
Than to go forth and labor in the world, (3)
And struggle sore with other men therein? (2)
Not to serve other men, nor yet his God, (6)
But to maintain these comfortable homes,— (1)
The end of all a normal man's desires. (4)

Shall not the soul's most measureless desires (4)
Learn that the very flower and fruit of life (5)
Lies all attained in comfortable homes, (1)
With which life's purpose is to dot the world (3)
And consummate the utmost will of God, (6)
By sitting down to eat and drink therein. (2)

Yea, in the processes that work therein— (2)
Fulfilment of our natural desires— (4)
Surely man finds the proof that mighty God (6)
For to maintain and reproduce his life (5)
Created him and set him in the world; (3)
And this high end is best attained in homes. (1)

Are we not homes? And is not all therein? (1, 2)
Wring dry the world to meet our wide desires! (3, 4)
We crown all life! We are the aim of God! (5, 6)

Clearly, in writing the sestina, the first thing to do,—certainly the first thing after the first stanza has been com-

pleted—is to write down immediately the words that are to end all of the other lines, in the required order. Then the sense may be developed as clearly as the writer is capable of doing. It will be noticed that, in the sestina given, the restriction that the terminal words must be two-syllabled nouns is discarded, and masculine endings substituted, nouns or not as the poet desires. This liberty is usually taken in sestinas in English.

Swinburne uses, as the six terminal words in one of his rhymed sestinas, *day, night, way, light, may, delight,* or based upon the scheme a, b, a, b, a, b for lines, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6; and thereafter follows the scheme of alternate rhymes in every stanza, so that his terminals for the last five stanzas end: 6, 1, 4, 3, 2, 5; 5, 6, 1, 4, 3, 2; 2, 5, 6, 1, 4, 3; 3, 2, 1, 6, 5, 4; 4, 3, 2, 5, 6, 1, with the terminals of the concluding triplet 4, 3, 6 (*light, way, delight*) and the lines centered with 1, 2, 5 (*day, night, may*). Charles W. Coleman, in his sestina *Love's Going,* uses three rhyme sounds, his first six terminals being *sing, rose, heart, thing, goes, apart.* These are, of course, his 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6. Thereafter he develops his terminals in the order given above to dictate the sequence in the case of unrhymed sestinas. As a result, he has rhyming couplets in the second, third, fourth, and fifth stanzas. Similarly, with the two rhymes, *a* and *b,* Swinburne could have followed the first sequence of terminals given; and would have had rhymed couplets, and, in some stanzas, three rhyming sounds coming together. His method is to be preferred to this; and, to avoid the same thing in the sestina with three rhyme sounds,

some formal departure from the first sequence of terminals given could be devised, similar to Swinburne's.

The Villanelle.—The villanelle is one of the most attractive of the French forms, and lends itself to a mood of high seriousness as well as to merry-thought frivolity and morning-minded mirth. The perfect model consists of nineteen lines—five three-line stanzas, concluding with one of four lines. The refrain, which appears in lines eighteen and nineteen, is taken from the first and third lines of the first stanza. Line one terminates the second and fourth stanzas, line three terminates the third and fifth. Only two rhyme sounds are permitted. Oscar Wilde's villanelle, *Theocritus,* follows the strict pattern:

O Singer of Persephone! (*a*–1)
  In the dim meadows desolate, (*b*)
Dost thou remember Sicily? (*a*–2)

Still through the ivy flits the bee (*a*)
  Where Amaryllis lies in state; (*b*)
O Singer of Persephone! (*a*–1)

Simaetha calls on Hecate, (*a*)
  And hears the wild dogs at the gate; (*b*)
Dost thou remember Sicily? (*a*–2)

Still by the light and laughing sea (*a*)
  Poor Polypheme bemoans his fate; (*b*)
O Singer of Persephone! (*a*–1)

And still in boyish rivalry (*a*)
  Young Daphnis challenges his mate; (*b*)
Dost thou remember Sicily? (*a*–2)

Slim Lacon keeps a goat for thee; (*a*)
For thee the jocund shepherds wait; (*b*)
O Singer of Persephone! (*a*–1)
Dost thou remember Sicily? (*a*–2)

This gives the rhyme and refrain scheme: a–1, b, a–2; a, b, a–1; a, b, a–2; a, b, a–1; a, b, a–2; a, b, a–1, a–2. As always, no rhyme sound, once used, can be repeated. Edwin Arlington Robinson, in his villanelle *The House on the Hill,* pours poetry into the form; and indeed this villanelle forms a sort of text of much of his early singing, with its bleak burden,

There is ruin and decay
In the House on the Hill:
They are all gone away,
There is nothing more to say.

Yet the mood may be as light as the song of Henley's, closing:

Yes, the overword is plain,—
If it's trivial, if it's trite—
In the clatter of the train:
"I shall see my love again!"

or this madder mood, in slang, by the same poet,

Which, Joe, is why I ses to you—
Aestheticlike, and limp, and free—
Now *ain't* they utterly too-too,
Them flymy little bits of Blue?

The Lai and the Virelai.—In the ancient lai, the French used couplets of five-syllabled lines, all on the same rhyme,

separated by single lines of two syllables each, which rhymed with one another. The number of lines in each stanza was not fixed, nor the number of stanzas in the complete poem. A brief example would be,

Summer heat today (*a*)
In its torrid way, (*a*)
I see, (*b*)
With its awful ray (*a*)
Sears, till it must slay— (*a*)
Aw gee! (*b*)
Tree and grass and clay. (*a*)
It's the bay—the spray— (*a*)
For me! (*b*)

Here all the *a* lines are five-syllabled, and the *b* lines are two. A curious old tradition appears in the fact that no indentation is used for the briefer lines. This detail was called *Arbre fourchu,* a forked tree, from the fancied resemblance of the poem on paper to a tree with branches projecting. Moreover, the above lai has but one stanza. Where more are written, each one has its own pair of rhyme sounds, without reference to the preceding ones.

The *virelai* or *virelai ancien* grew out of this, adding a sequence of rhymes throughout. Thus, in a twelve-line stanza, the rhymes would be a, a, b, a, a, b, a, a, b, a, a, b. The next stanza would be rhymed b, b, c, b, b, c, b, b, c, b, b, c; and so on until the last stanza appeared with the rhyme scheme z, z, a, z, z, a, z, z, a, z, z, a, its short lines rhymed with the long lines of stanza one. Thus each rhyme appears twice, once in the longer couplets, once in the short

single lines. John Payne's virelai *Spring Sadness* opens and closes with the following stanzas:

As I sat sorrowing, (*a*)
Love came and bade me sing (*a*)
A joyous song and meet, (*b*)
For see (said he) each thing (*a*)
Is merry for the Spring, (*a*)
And every bird doth greet (*b*)
The break of blossoming, (*a*)
That all the woodlands ring (*a*)
Unto the young hours' feet. (*b*)

Wherefore put off defeat (*b*)
And rouse thee to repeat (*b*)
The chimes of merles that go. (*c*)

and so on, b, b, c, b, b, c to the end of the second stanza; the verses concluding,

So for the sad soul's ease (*j*)
Remembrance treasures these (*j*)
Against Time's harvesting, (*a*)
That so, when mild Death frees (*j*)
The soul from Life's disease (*j*)
Of strife and sorrowing, (*a*)
In glass of memories (*j*)
The new hope looks and sees (*j*)
Through Death a brighter Spring. (*a*)

and the rhyme has returned to the *a* of the first stanza.

The *virelai nouveau* is written throughout in two rhymes. Its initial rhymed couplet serves as a refrain for the later stanzas, and the two lines close each stanza alternately until the last, when they appear both together, but in in-

verse order. Austin Dobson's *July* is an example, its first stanza being the couplet a–1, a–2. Its second stanza is rhymed, a, a, a, b, a, a–1. Its third is a, b, a, b, a, b, b, a, a–2. The third, fourth, and fifth are as irregular; but each is confined to the two rhyme sounds, and the refrains occur in the prescribed order. The opening couplet and the concluding stanza, showing the refrain reversed, are:

Good-bye to the Town!—good-bye! (*a*–1)
Hurrah for the sea and the sky! . . . (*a*–2)

So Phillis, the fawn-footed, hie (*a*)
For a hansom! Ere close of the day (*b*)
Between us a "world" must lie,— (*a*)
Hurrah! for the sea and the sky! (*a*–2)
Good-bye to the Town! GOOD-BYE! (*a*–1)

The *Sicilian octave* at times is used as a fixed form. It consists in eight iambic five-foot lines, rhymed a, b, a, b, a, b, a, b. No difficulty will be experienced in writing to this pattern, if the versifier desires to. The *rispetto* is an alien form, coming from Italy, with inter-rhyming lines ranging from six to ten in number, often not exceeding eight. Used rarely in English, it is usually divided into two stanzas, rhymed a, b, a, b; c, c, d, d. It has little to commend it as a form.

The Limerick.—The limerick, as Brander Matthews points out, is the only fixed form indigenous to the English language. It is now clear that it did not come from an old Irish song, with a refrain commencing "Will you come up to Limerick?"; although attempts have been made to link

it with the song. Again, it was not invented by Edward Lear, master of light verse and tutor in the family of the Earl of Derby; although from 1834 onward he wrote the first wholesale group of limericks, which, on their publication in 1846, attained to a prompt popularity. The origin of the limerick traces further back, and is connected with the activities of a member of the Vertigoose family, whose first representative reached New England in 1650. Three-quarters of a century later, on June 8, 1715, the Rev. Cotton Mather married Thomas Fleet, a Boston printer, to one Elizabeth Goose—for the two initial syllables of the name had by now been dropped. And, four years afterwards, in 1719, there appeared an unpretentious volume, *Songs for the Nursery, or, Mother Goose's Melodies for Children,* "printed by Thomas Fleet, at his printing house, Pudding Lane (Boston). Price, Two Coppers." Pudding Lane has been dignified into Devonshire Street, and Time his scythe has swept with magniverous vigor; but the rhymes of Mother Goose are perennial favorites, and eternal sources of information as to English folklore: for the lady primarily garnered the unculled folk-rhymes, and only secondarily composed her own. This collection illustrates all the stages of the limerick, commencing with the one which has its first and fifth lines a meaningless refrain,

Hickory, dickory, dock!
The mouse ran up the clock.
The clock struck one—
The mouse ran down,
Hickory, dickory, dock!

"Diddledy, diddledy, dumpty, The cat ran up the plum-tree," "Dickery, dickery, dare, The pig flew up in the air," and the most charming of all, "Danty baby diddy, What can a mammy do wid'ee, But sit in a lap And give 'un a pap, Sing danty, baby, diddy" all follow this pattern. The second type of limerick is the one used by Edward Lear, ending as a rule on a geographical name, and repeating, in whole or slightly changed, line one as line five. "As I was going to Bonner" and others in Mother Goose are in this mold. The last form has a new rhyme sound to end line five, and a sense of culmination in the line, as in the example from Mother Goose,

There was an old soldier of Bister
Went walking one day with his sister,
When a cow at one poke
Tossed her into an oak,
Before the old gentleman missed her.

The dietetic episode of the old man of Tobago follows the same pattern; and Lear never progressed to this stage—which, by the way, is as far in skeletal arrangement as the limerick ever has gone. In fact, the limerick was never more than a four-line poem with Lear, since he compressed lines three and four into one, as in this example:

There was an old man of Thermopylœ,
Who never did anything properly;
But they said, "If you choose to boil eggs in your shoes,
You shall never remain in Thermopylœ."

Even closer to his usual type is:

There was an old Lady of Winchelsea,
Who said, "If you needle or pin shall see
On the floor of my room, sweep it up with the broom!"
That exhaustive old Lady of Winchelsea!

Lear's rhymes are delightfully devised, in the best tradition of good light verse. But, for the model for modern practitioners to follow, let us take this anonymous classic,

There was a young lady from Niger,
Who smiled as she rode on a tiger.
They came back from the ride
With the lady inside,
And the smile on the face of the tiger.

The rhyming is a, a, b, b, a. Lines one, two, and five have three feet each, predominantly anapestic; lines three and four have two feet each, also of anapests. The pattern might be simplified into:

la LA—la la LA—la la LA la,
la LA—la la LA—la la LA la,
la la LA—la la LA
la la LA—la la LA,
la la LA—la la LA—la la LA la.

The *a* rhymes may be single, as in this limerick, attributed to Rudyard Kipling:

There was a small boy of Quebec,
Who was buried in snow to his neck.
When asked, "Are you friz?"
He answered, "I is,—
But we don't call this cold in Quebec."

The names of practitioners in the field is a young *Who's Who* of famous versifiers: Swinburne, Rossetti, Ruskin, Arnold Bennett, W. S. Gilbert, Gelett Burgess, Oliver Wendell Holmes, Oliver Herford, Robert J. Burdette—and so on and on. Ted Robinson has done over the classics in the form, as this perversion of the *Iliad* laughingly indicates:

There was a young man named Achilles,
Whose wrongs always gave him the willies.
  So he sulked in his tent
  Like a half-witted gent—
Say, wasn't them heroes the sillies!

Within the five-line limit, a myriad of things have been done with the pattern. Take this extraordinarily adept rhyming:

An amorous M. A.
Says that Cupid, that C. D.,
  Doesn't cast for his health,
  But is rolling in wealth—
He's the John Jaco-B. H.

This looks incredible, until you pronounce lines two and five to rhyme perfectly with "master of arts," which M. A. signifies. There are a thousand plays on repetition of similar sounds, the tongue-twister type, like:

A tutor who tooted the flute
Tried to teach two young tootors to toot.
  Said the two to the tutor,
  "Is it harder to toot, or
To tutor two tooters to toot?"

No, say it faster than that—just as fast as possible, to get the right effect. Or this medical note,

There was an old man of Calcutta
Who had an unfortunate stutter.
"I would like," he once said,
"Some b-b-b-b-bread,
And some b-b-b-b-b-b-butter."

The temptation to quote forever must be resisted; but not before we purloin:

There was a young lady of Diss,
Who said, "Now I think skating bliss!"
This no more will she state,
For a wheel off her skate
Made her finish up something like this!

It was Arnold Bennett who adjudged that the best limericks are always unprintable; and there are many who will not disagree with him. Yet the printable ones are a Comstock Lode of amusement; and popular interest multiplies in them, due to the practice of printing "Last Line" limericks in many periodicals, with large rewards offered for the best line to complete the first four that are given—rewards in one English contest mounting to $2,250 per word to the winner.

Little Willies.—Any form may become, almost overnight, a favorite with light verse writers. Some college student wrote and published in his college paper a rhyme approximating:

Tobacco is a filthy weed—
I like it.
It satisfies no normal need—
I like it.
It makes you thin, it makes you lean,
It takes the hair right off your bean;
It's the worst darned stuff I've ever seen.
I like it.

The form took on; and every newspaper colyumist and professional or amateur versifier—we overlook possible exceptions—leapt at the form, and chronicled a like in an identical stanza. Similarly, any of the practically unknown fixed forms might have a mushroom popularity. But a certain type of American quatrain has already achieved wide popularity, and bids fair to become a type. Its archetype appeared in Col. D. Streamer's (Harry Graham's) 1902 *Ruthless Rhymes for Heartless Homes:*

Billy, in one of his nice new sashes,
Fell in the fire and was burned to ashes;
Now, although the room grows chilly,
I haven't the heart to poke poor Billy.

The quatrain consists here of two rhymed couplets, the scheme being a, a, b, b. The metre combines trochees and dactyls; it might be iambs and anapests, of course, or any one of the four. Somehow Billy got rechristened as Willie, and at least one anonymous volume has appeared since, dealing with his adventures, and those of his kind. I have myself encountered more than a score of different versions

of the one quatrain given up above, my own favorite ending:

No one likes to stir up Willie.

A few of the more typical of the sadistic type are:

Willie and two other brats
Licked up all the Rough-on-Rats.
Father said, when mother cried,
"Never mind, they'll die outside."

Willie fell down the elevator,
Wasn't found till six days later.
Then the neighbors said, "Gee whiz!
What a spoiled child Willie is!"

Willie poisoned Auntie's tea,
Auntie died in agony.
Uncle came and looked quite vext,
"Really, Will," he said, "what next?"

Willie in the cauldron fell,—
  See the grief on mother's brow;
Mother loved her darling well,—
  Willie's quite hard-boiled by now.

This rhymes a, b, a, b; and other variants use six and even eight lines. Kindred glees from Harry Graham's volume are:

Making toast at the fireside,
Nurse fell in the grate and died;
And, what makes it ten times worse,
All the toast was burned *with* nurse.

Father heard his Children scream,
So he threw them in the stream,
Saying, as he drowned the third,
"Children should be seen, *not* heard!"

An Angel bore dear Uncle Joe
To rest beyond the stars.
I miss him, oh! I miss him so—
He had *such* good cigars!

There is a kindred rhyme which may not be omitted:

Dr. Jones fell in the well,
And died without a moan;
He should have tended to the sick,
And let the well alone.

And this anonymous masterpiece:

Little Willie hung his sister;
She was dead before we missed her.
"Willie's always up to tricks.
Ain't he cute? He's only six!"

The model for a Little Willie, with its trick last line, and its predilection for themes somewhat sadistic, can be taken from any of these.

For those interested in the genesis of forms of poetry, a plausible theory is suggested, to aid the antiquarians in their excavations into the roots of the Little Willies. Julia A. Moore, the "Sweet Singer of Michigan," published in 1876 her first volume; and it swept the country like halitosis. It became the stamping-ground of the newspaper

humorists and parodists overnight; and, among Miss Moore's most amazing obituary successors, was:

Willie had a purple monkey climbing on a yellow stick,
And when he sucked the paint all off it made him very sick;
And in his latest hours he clasped that monkey in his hand,
And bade good-bye to earth and went into a better land.

Oh! no more he'll shoot his sister with his little wooden gun;
And no more he'll twist the pussy's tail and make her yowl, for fun.
The pussy's tail now stands out straight; the gun is laid aside;
The monkey doesn't jump around since little Willie died.

This was written in dreadful earnestness; as was the Poesque elegy on the death of the sheriff's daughter, an even more utter favorite:

We have lost our little Hanner in a very painful manner,
And we often ask, How can her harsh sufferings be borne?
When her death was first reported, her aunt got up and snorted,
With the grief that she supported, for it made her forlorn.
She was such a little seraph that her father, who is sheriff,
Really doesn't seem to care if he ne'er smiles in life again.
She has gone, we hope, to heaven, at the early age of seven
(Funeral starts off at eleven), where she'll nevermore have pain.

This was great; but the former masterpiece may have inspired the later spilth of Little Willies, as parodies of the heartrendering mood.

II Light Verse in English

The True Beginning.—The examples given of the French and other fixed forms, barring the two concluding types, indicate to many that (with the exception of the sonnet) no one of the fixed forms is adapted, in English, to either the greatest poetry, or the most pleasing light verse. The light versifier is as prone as his serious cater-cousin the poet to compose his own pattern as he proceeds; and stanzas as intricate individually as the most elaborate Provençal or French model are trifles to the light versifier, if only he is not bound by the rigidity of sustained rhyme sounds throughout, which lays such a geas upon his soul to revamp his verses, at the dictates of a limited number of rhyming sounds.

From the classic comedy of Aristophanes and his Greek and Latin lesser kin, the acidulous satires of Juvenal, and the leisurely verse of Horace and Propertius, the craft of light verse spread over the world. Each land has its essential luminaries, its preferred types, its treasured anthology of verse in the various moods, whimsical, nonsensical, satirical, humorous, witty, punning, dialect, and parody. In England, Shakespeare and his compeers brushed the sky in great comedy; such scenes as Falstaff's rantings, the antics of Bottom's troups, the burlesquerie of Merrythought and his fellows, shaking the groundlings and the peers alike. The dominant mood in many of the Caroline lyricists was sheer light verse. Take this lyric of Sir John Suckling's:

Why so pale and wan, fond lover?
  Prythee, why so pale?
Will, if looking well can't move her,
  Looking ill prevail?
  Prythee, why so pale?

Why so dull and mute, young sinner?
  Prythee, why so mute?
Will, when speaking well can't win her,
  Saying nothing do't?
  Prythee, why so mute?

Quit, quit, for shame! this will not move,
  This cannot take her;
If of herself she will not love,
  Nothing can make her:
  The Devil take her!

This is as graceful as the most courtly rondeau could be; but the poet is not bound by the artificiality of using the same limited set of rhyming sounds in every stanza; and so he moves in a mood of naturalness that, to many ears, improves upon the recurrent tinkle of the same rhyme sounds. This is in the mood still called by the French name of *vers de société;* no English name seems to cover it adequately, neither occasional verse, nor—heaven forbid!—society verse, nor elegant verse, although Frederick Locker-Lampson called his collection *Lyra Elegantiarum.* That adept in the form spoke some truetalk concerning it, in the introduction to his anthology:

a kind (of poetry) which, in its more restricted form, has somewhat the same relation to the poetry of lofty imagination and

deep feeling, that the Dresden China Shepherds and Shepherdesses of the last century bear to the sculpture of Donatello and Michael Angelo; namely, smoothly written verse, where a boudoir decorum is, or ought to be, preserved; where sentiment never surges into passion, and where humour never overflows into boisterous merriment.

Thus *Lear* and the *Ode to Autumn* are excluded; but so are the ribaldries of *Tam o' Shanter* and Thomas Hood's punning ballads.

In his (the editor's) judgment Occasional Verse should be short, graceful, refined, and fanciful, not seldom distinguished by chastened sentiment, and often playful. The tone should not be pitched high; it should be terse and idiomatic, and rather in the conversational key; the rhythm should be crisp and sparkling, and the rhyme frequent and never forced, while the entire poem should be marked by tasteful moderation, high finish, and completeness; for, however trivial the subject-matter may be, indeed, rather in proportion to its triviality, subordination to the rules of composition, and perfection of execution, are of the utmost importance.

Much of the spirit of this, especially of its conclusion, may be underwritten, without accepting the shadow of Mrs. Grundy, emanating no doubt from the purlieus of Windsor Castle, that alters it from the whole vigor of English light verse. Locker-Lampson proceeds to define by example, eliminating Cowper's *John Gilpin* as too broadly humorous, much of Swift and Byron as too savagely satiric, *Sally in Our Alley* as too homely. Pope's mock epic, *The Rape of the Lock,* trips meekly into the enclosure; and the

editor finds that the outstanding names in the area are Suckling and Herrick, Swift and Prior, Cowper, Landor, and Thomas Moore, Praed and Thackeray. The first two of these live as serious lyricists, Swift for his prose satires, Moore for his saccharine heart songs, Thackeray for his novels; none of them ranks among the few masters of light verse in English, or beside Calverly, the Carryls, Lewis Carroll, W. S. Gilbert, and a few later names. There was great grace in Prior and Praed; and yet their product is already as outdated as the fashions in *Godey's Lady's Book.* Light verse has this tendency: it too often is journalistic, in that it enshrines the fads and fancies of the hour, and, a few score years later, demands an extensive glossary. Yet a few immortal peaks continue to obtrude above the day's mists of forgetfulness; and these demand our attention.

Locker-Lampson's definition would have excluded Samuel Butler's *Hudibras,* that blinding blast of wit against the anti-royalists which appeared early in the Restoration. As a whole, it is as outmoded as Paradise Lost; but it has become a well of popular quotations, and its rhyming and episodic conceits are magnificently handled. Take his picture of his hero, Sir Hudibras, requoted a thousand times:

> He could distinguish and divide
> A hair 'twixt south and south-west side;
> On either side he would dispute,
> Confute, change hands, and still confute;
> He'd undertake to prove, by force
> Of argument, a man's no horse; . . .

A calf an alderman, a goose a justice,
And rooks committee-men and trustees. . . .
He could raise scruples dark and nice
And after solve 'em in a trice,
As if divinity had catched
The itch, on purpose to be scratched.

Again he is pictured—

'Twas Presbyterian true blue,
For he was of that stubborn crew
Of errant saints, whom all men grant
To be the true church militant;
Such as do build their faith upon
The holy text of pike and gun;
Decide all controversies by
Infallible artillery;
And prove their doctrines orthodox
By apostolic blows and knocks;
Call fire and sword, and desolation,
A godly thorough reformation, . . .
Compound for sins that they're inclined to,
By damning those they have no mind to.
Still so perverse and opposite,
As if they worshipped God for spite.

So he roars on for full ten thousand lines, packed with wit, and wisdom, and burning satire. And what he does to rhyme is, in today's argot, nobody's business. He is charmed to couple—

sight would, knighthood; errant, warrant; pronounce, once; navel, malleable; comment, moment; engines, penguins; twice I, *vici;* subdue, tub to; dwell in, feeling

Mis-rhymes, consonances, assonances, vary his torrential vigor of accurate rhymes. In high good humour he miscounsels us,

> But those that write in rhyme, still make
> The one verse for the other's sake;
> But one for sense, and one for rhyme,
> I think's sufficient at one time,

a counsel he takes pains never to follow. Alas, what he does not do with the belaurelled ladies loved of poets!

> She that with poetry is won
> Is but a desk to write upon.

We must pass on, not overlooking Coleridge's rhyme, which Locker-Lampson's canon again would have excluded:

> In Köln, a town of monks and bones,
> And pavements fanged with murderous stones,
> And rags, and hags, and hideous wenches,
> I counted two-and-seventy stenches,
> All well defined, and several stinks!
> Ye nymphs that reign o'er sewers and sinks,
> The river Rhine, it is well known,
> Doth wash your city of Cologne;
> But tell me, nymphs! what power divine
> Shall henceforth wash the river Rhine?

Pope, in his most savage moments, wrote satire that was light verse utilizing the whole barrage of the language; Byron did no less. Thackeray poked high fun at Goethe, in *The Sorrows of Werther:*

Werther had a love for Charlotte,
Such as words could never utter;
Would you know how first he met her?
She was cutting bread and butter.

Charlotte was a married lady,
And a moral man was Werther,
And for all the wealth of Indies
Would do nothing for to hurt her.

So he sighed and pined and ogled,
And his passion boiled and bubbled,
Till he blew his silly brains out,
And no more by it was troubled.

Charlotte, having seen his body
Borne before her on a shutter,
Like a well-conducted person,
Went on cutting bread and butter.

Oliver Goldsmith's *Elegy on the Death of a Mad Dog* and other light pieces, as well as a number of Cowper's more riotous verses, earn mention. Thomas Hood, remembered too for his *Song of the Shirt* and *The Bridge of Sighs,* is the Lord High Executioner of punning verse. His ballads, such as *Faithless Nelly Gray,* are extended; and the opening and conclusion may well give his uniform excellence, which has become a model for subsequent punning verse:

Ben Battle was a soldier bold,
  And used to war's alarms;
But a cannon-ball took off his legs,
  And he laid down his arms!

Now, as they bore him off the field,
Said he, "Let others shoot,
For here I leave my second leg,
And the Forty-second Foot!"

The army surgeons made him limbs;
Said he, "They're only pegs,
But they're as wooden members quite
As represent my legs!"

Now Ben he loved a pretty maid,
Her name was Nelly Gray;
He went to pay her his devours,
When he'd devoured his pay!

But when he called on Nelly Gray,
She made him quite a scoff;
And when she saw his wooden legs,
Began to take them off!

"O Nelly Gray! O Nelly Gray!
Is this your love so warm?
The love that loves a scarlet coat
Should be more uniform!" . . .

"Before you had those timber toes,
Your love I did allow;
But then, you know, you stand upon
Another footing now!"

"O Nelly Gray! O Nelly Gray!
For all your jeering speeches,
At duty's call I left my legs
In Badajoa's breaches!"

"Why, then," said he, "you've lost the feet
Of legs in war's alarms,
And now you cannot wear your shoes
Upon your feats of arms!" . . .

One end he tied around a beam,
And then removed his pegs,
And as his legs were off—of course,
He soon was off his legs!

And there he hung till he was dead
As any nail in town—
For though distress had cut him up,
It could not cut him down!

A dozen men sat on his corpse,
A verdict for to tell;
They went and told the sexton, and
The sexton tolled the bell!

The Rhythms of Mother Goose.—Writers of light verses will take, as one of their bibles, the compilation by Mistress Elizabeth Goose, already referred to. The book is far older than Boston, in its rootage; the heart of the collection is as English as a Yorkshire pudding. Old King Cole was a legendary British ruler of the third century; the lines "When good King Arthur ruled the land" refer to a folk hero said to have ruled not long after. The language of the rhymes at times dates them. Thus the *cock-horse* in *Ride a Cock-Horse to Banbury Cross* means a little horse; the prefix is an old diminutive, reappearing in *Who Killed Cock-Robin?* which means a tiny robin, rather than

Mr. Robin. Such proper names as Hancock, Leacock, Wilcox, show the same form. *Tom Thumb's Alphabet* uses such good old words as *bouse,* to drink deeply (compare its seedy slang son, *booze*) and *zany,* an old name for fool. The very occupations listed here, *Archer, Gamester, Tinker, Vintner,* point to a pre-Volstead age long forgotten. In other places we have the *piper,* the *joiner,* the *grenadier,* the *candlestick-maker;* the echo of an old scorn appears in the *four-and-twenty tailors* who shrank from the snail.

The rhymes date from that golden past when a man was a king, and a king a giant. Old King Cole drank from a bowl, not from an effeminate goblet; King Arthur was not above making a bag pudding, nor his queen from frying its scraps. "Taffy was a Welshman, Taffy was a thief" and the "rogue of a Jew" point to medieval prejudices, not worth their faint survival. The atmosphere is as democratic as the old regime in Russia: the Farmer merely "followed the plough," while the Esquire "had pride on his brow," the Nobleman was "gallant and bold," and the Lady—and old romance speaks in the lovely old line —"had a white hand." The ladies and gentlemen ride like ladies and gentlemen; the farmer rides "hobble-de-hoy." The sovereign state of Louisiana recently dismissed quaint old Mother Goose from its list of school readings, because of the slight this line brought upon his modern majesty the farmer. What ribald joy this would have brought to Mother Goose, who did not hesitate to write,

Q was a Queen, who was fond of good flip.

And there is sheer poetry here, as in the exquisite charm *Matthew, Mark, Luke and John,* the appealing *If I'd as Much Money as I Could Tell,* and many more.

But it is the free grasp of indigenous rhythms that dates the rhymes most of all. We have found the iambic foot the norm of the bulk of poetry in English; but this is not true of the dawn song of Mother Goose. Of the fifty best known verses in the collection, 11 show iambs predominating; 15, trochees; 20, dactyls; 2, anapests; and 2, amphibrachs. Among the iambic tunes are *When Good King Arthur Ruled This Land* and *There Was a Man in Our Town;* among the trochees, *Jack Be Nimble, Jack and Jill, Simple Simon;* among the dactyllics, *Old Mother Goose, Needles and Pins;* anapestic, *As I Walked by Myself;* amphibrachic, *I Like Little Pussy.* And yet the majority of the rhymes follow an older design than any of these feet—that design revived by Coleridge in *Christabel* and constantly increasing in popularity, which bases the pattern on the number of accents to the line, let the unaccented syllables fall where they may. With this goes a masterly use of pause. Take this familiar rhyme:

Péase | pórridge | hót! |
Péase | pórridge | cóld! |
Péase | pórridge | ín the | pót |
Níne | dáys | óld. |

That is a fairly elaborate example of accent metre, with

its nine feet out of thirteen consisting of only one syllable. Yet no child has difficulty in comprehending the rhythm; it is accepted with quite the ease that an iambic rhythm is assimilated. Or take this one, with the pauses preceding the accents in line one—for the dominant rhythm is iambic, or at least iambic plus anapestic—the anapests in line two, the pause before the opening of line three, and the iambs of line four:

Hárk, | hárk, | the dógs | do bárk, |
The bég- | gars are cóm- | ing to tówn, |
Sóme | in rágs, | and sóme | in tágs,
And sóme | in vél- | vet gówns.

The same omission of initial short syllables occurs in the anapestic movement of:

Old | King Cóle |
Was a mér- | ry old soul, |
And a mér- | ry old soul | was he; |

but here too iambs occur, and the thing is really metre patterned on the number of accented syllables to the line. *Ding, Dong, Bell* is a good example—and no child, once he has caught the notion, can be misled as to the rhythm of these lines:

Díng, | dóng, | béll, |

Pússy's | ín the | wéll. |

Who | pút her | in? |

Líttle | Tómmy | Gréen. |

Of the same type are *Who Killed Cock Robin?, Three Blind Mice, Baa Baa Black Sheep, Tell Tale Tit, One, Two, Buckle My Shoe,* and many more. This method of measuring metre solely by the number of accented syllables in the line is of highly ancient lineage. The foot may consist of four syllables, as in *There Was a Little Man,* where the dominant beat appears from the line

He cár- | ried it hóme | to his óld | wife Joán, |

which has only four accents; which dictates that the opening line should properly be read,

There wás | a little mán | and he hád | a little gún, |

the way children normally read it. *There Was a Little Girl Who Had a Little Curl* also has, properly, but four accents to the line, and not six. Again, this line from the classic *There Was an Old Woman* illustrates the same movement:

She | began to shív- | er and she | began to shake. |

Not only have the immortal themes of these rhymes been re-done into more elaborate light verse, as we shall see when we reach Guy Wetmore Carryl, who is first among

many in the field; but they may properly be used to set the metre and the mood of serious poetry. *London Bridge Is Falling Down* gives its title *London Bridge* to Edwin Arlington Robinson for one of his most serious poems, with the rhythm coming from Mother Goose, and the folk rhyme playing with dreadful insistence above the music of the poem; and Chesterton, in his resonant *The Old Song,* has embroidered the words and rhythm into an effective serious poem. We found a quatrain from *If I'd as Much Money* used as the text in the example given under the glose; and the rhymes remain, a rich mine for any versifier's delving.

There Were Giants.—Edward Lear is one of the important light verse writers of the past century, not only for his limericks, but for some of his longer verses. Poetry, as a rule, is recognized at first glance: it gives that tremendous emotional uplift at once; and the feeling recurs in its pristine vigor at each rereading. So it should be; and great light verse has the same effect. A different part of the emotional body responds; but the response is as definite, immediate, and lasting. Much of *Mother Goose* gives this; and you might test yourself on the song *The House of Peers* ("When Britain really ruled the waves,") from *Iolanthe,* or on the finale from Act I of the same play. If you do not get the cosmic kick from these, it is to be doubted if your nature is susceptible to light verse, in any essential sense. As a rule, every line of first rate light verse is perfect, and natural in its place; and the whole piece seems inevitable. Some of Lear answers to this: it thrills,

where, to me at least, the best of Praed and Prior, Goldsmith and Cowper, Thackeray and Locker-Lampson, merely mildly amuse. It is not mild amusement that the best light verse evokes: it is a choking ribaldry that must be suppressed, or, if it is let out, is liable to alarm the neighbors with its explosiveness.

Lear's *The Owl and the Pussy-Cat* is a magnificent example of nonsense verse. It veers close to sense throughout; but its sails never quite enter upon the sea of actual sense. It is musical throughout. Lest there be benighted mortals who have not access to it, one stanza will be given:

> The Owl and the Pussy-Cat went to sea
> In a beautiful pea-green boat:
> They took some honey, and plenty of money
> Wrapped up in a five-pound note.
> The Owl looked up to the stars above,
> And sang to a small guitar,
> "O lovely Pussy, O Pussy, my love.
> What a beautiful Pussy you are,
> You are,
> You are,
> What a beautiful Pussy you are!"

In common with other great nonsense verse, the subsequent stanzas add to our knowledge of nonsensical botany and metallurgy, with the bong-tree and the runcible spoon. To many, Lear's *The Jumblies, The Dong with a Luminous Nose, The Quangle Wangle's Hat,* and many another, are

as memorable; but these, to me, all sag a trifle below the story of Athena's bird and the lesser Sekmet, and below the magic of *The Pobble Who Has No Toes.*

Charles Stuart Calverly was born Charles Stuart Blayds, and under this name won his unique undergraduate literary distinction, of winning the Chancellor's prize at both Oxford and Cambridge—leaving the one university as the result of a college escapade, to shine as brightly in the second. When his father resumed the old family name of Calverly, rejected by a grandfather for Blayds, the son assumed the name we know him by. In spite of the brief extent of the verse which he left, he remains inimitable in his own peculiar field, which has been called the university school of humour. Into his lightest verse he carried over from the classics the polish and elegance of the great masters, and it is hard to deny the word poetry to his more distinguished products. Much of his half century of life, which ended in 1884, he was an invalid; but he was reckoned one of the most brilliant men of his day, and his verse amply demonstrates the justice of the ranking.

The tantalizing thing about his verse is that it is never, even in occasional pieces to personal friends, second rate; so that the task of selecting for quotation is Sisyphian. His translation from Horace, for instance, set rolling that ball which Eugene Field and many others kept going, until it has become a stock in trade of living newspaper colyumists. Over and over again he has invented a poetic form that reappears in all the touted modern light versi-

fiers. We cannot go wrong in commencing with the *Ode to Tobacco:*

Thou who, when fears attack
Bidst them avaunt, and Black
Care, at the horseman's back
  Perching, unseatest;
Sweet when the morn is gray;
Sweet, when they've cleared away
Lunch; and at close of day
  Possibly sweetest:

I have a liking old
For thee, though manifold
Stories, I know, are told,
  Not to thy credit;
How one (or two at most)
Drops make a cat a ghost—
Useless, except to roast—
  Doctors have said it;

How they who use fusees
All grow by slow degrees
Brainless as chimpanzees,
  Meagre as lizards;
Go mad, and beat their wives;
Plunge (after shocking lives)
Razors and carving knives
  Into their gizzards.

Confound such knavish tricks!
Yet know I five or six
Smokers who freely mix
  Still with their neighbors;

Jones—(who, I'm glad to say,
Asked leave of Mrs. J.—)
Daily absorbs a clay
After his labours.

Cats may have had their goose
Cooked by tobacco-juice;
Still why deny its use
Thoughtfully taken?
We're not as tabbies are:
Smith, take a fresh cigar!
Jones, the tobacco-jar!
Here's to thee, Bacon!

We mentioned the ephemerality of light verse; and *fusees,* to modern minds, needs a gloss; and we may have forgotten what the last line refers to. The stanza scheme comes from Longfellow's *The Skeleton in Armor,* or some earlier use of the same pattern; but the inevitability of the light verse here has made this the pattern for subsequent essays in the same scheme and mood. There is utter cleverness in the mingling of the super-stately opening with the homeliness of the sixth line: if you think the form easy to write, just try it once. To make these brief lines come in with the finality of the crack of doom, as Calverly makes them, is a task for a master. His *Forever* and *Changed* set a pattern as popular, and quite as difficult. Take two stanzas of the latter:

I know not why my soul is racked:
Why I ne'er smile as was my wont:
I only know that, as a fact,
I don't.

I used to roam o'er glen and glade
  Buoyant and blithe as other folk:
And not unfrequently I made
    A joke. . . .

I cannot sing the old songs now!
  It is not that I deem them low;
'Tis that I can't remember how
    They go.
I could not range the hills till high
  Above me stood the summer moon;
And as to dancing, I could fly
    As soon.

The mere naturalness of these short lines can be equalled, perhaps, but not excelled. When he turns to parody, as of the pre-Raphaelite balladists, well may Rossetti and the rest writhe in their graves:

The auld wive sat at her ivied door,
  (*Butter and eggs and a pound of cheese*)
A thing she had frequently done before;
  And her spectacles lay on her apron'd knees.

The piper he piped on the hill-top high,
  (*Butter and eggs and a pound of cheese*)
Till the cow said "I die," and the goose asked "Why?"
  And the dog said nothing, but searched for fleas. . . .

The farmer's daughter hath ripe red lips;
  (*Butter and eggs and a pound of cheese*)
If you try to approach her, away she skips
  Over tables and chairs with apparent ease.

The farmer's daughter hath soft brown hair;
(*Butter and eggs and a pound of cheese*)
And I met with a ballad, I can't say where,
Which wholly consisted of lines like these.

Go to Calverly yourself, and study the complete mastery of his medium in *Morning; In the Gloaming; Companions; Lovers, and a Reflection* and especially in the priceless *Precious Stones,* that minim epic of the cherry-stones which the prince's lips had dallied with:

Let Parliament abolish
Churches and States and Thrones;
With reverent hand I'll polish
Still, still my Cherrystones!
A clod—a piece of orange-peel—
An end of a cigar—
Once trod on by a Princely heel,
How beautiful they are!

The mold in which such verses were made broke, when their maker died. The best that we can do is to page Lepage, and use gingerly the reunited pattern.

Lewis Carroll (born and existing mathematically as Charles Lutwidge Dodgson) was a contemporary of Calverly's, outliving him by a few years. An Oxford lecturer on mathematics much of his life, he wrote learnedly on geometry, trigonometry, determinants, Euclid, and on curiosities of mathematics; and, as Mr. Dodgson, he persisted to the end in denying any connection with the beloved Lewis Carroll, his alter ego, whose *Alice in Wonderland, Through the Looking Glass, The Hunting of the Snark,*

Sylvie and Bruno, and *Rhyme? and Reason?* made him a demi-god to generations of children of all ages from none to ninety-nine. His field was pure nonsense; he was Lear, on a greater scale. Many of his best-known verses are close parodies upon the judicious serious poems of serious-minded poets, some of whom are forgotten while Lewis Carroll's funning trips on. And it rose to more than funning: his dedicatory verses "Child of the pure, unclouded brow," his *Love* from *Sylvie and Bruno,* are two among a number of verses that, to this one reader at least, are poems. He is greatest in pure nonsense, as in the mock epic of the Snark, or in *Jabberwocky:*

'Twas brillig, and the slithy toves
  Did gyre and gimble in the wabe;
All mimsy were the borogoves,
  And the mome raths outgrabe.

"Beware the Jabberwock, my son!
  The jaws that bite, the claws that catch!
Beware the Jubjub bird, and shun
  The frumious Bandersnatch!"

He took his vorpal sword in hand:
  Long time the manxome foe he sought—
Then rested he by the Tumtum tree,
  And stood awhile in thought.

And, as in uffish thought he stood,
  The Jabberwock, with eyes of flame,
Came whiffling through the tulgey wood,
  And burbled as it came!

One, two! One, two! And through and through
The vorpal blade went snicker-snack!
He left it dead, and with its head
He went galumphing back.

"And hast thou slain the Jabberwock?
Come to my arms, my beamish boy!
O frabjous day! Callooh! Callay!"
He chortled in his joy.

'Twas brillig, and the slithy toves
Did gyre and gimble in the wabe:
All mimsy were the borogoves,
And the mome raths outgrabe.

If this is high nonsensical romance, what can we say of the Snark poem, "An Agony, in Eight Fits," with its tremendously moving conclusion:

They hunted till darkness came on, but they found
Not a button, or feather, or mark,
By which they could tell that they stood on the ground
Where the Baker had met with the Snark.

In the midst of the word he was trying to say,
In the midst of his laughter and glee,
He had softly and suddenly vanished away—
For the Snark *was* a Boojum, you see.

Among the other greatly successful verses are the singing *The Whiting and the Snail; Turtle Soup* with its marvelous rhyme,

Who would not give all else for two p
Ennyworth of beautiful soup?

The Walrus and the Carpenter; the White Knight's song ("I'll tell thee everything I can"); *The Manlet,* that gorgeous parody of Swinburne, with its—

> "When the Ducklet's dark doom is decided,
> We will trundle him home in a trice,
> And the banquet, so plainly provided,
> Shall round into rose-buds and rice;
> In a blaze of pragmatic invention
> He shall wrestle with Fate, and shall reign;
> But he has not a friend fit to mention,
> So hit him again!"

Bessie's Song to Her Doll, My Fancy, The Lang Coortin', "and more, and more, and more." It is told that Victoria greatly admired the first Alice book, and requested that the author present her with a copy of his next; and that Dodgson-Carroll presented her majesty with a treatise on collegiate geometry. The story is no doubt spurious, and well worth being enshrined into a legend.

W. S. Gilbert (Sir William Schwenk Gilbert), the other half of the great Gilbert and Sullivan light opera partnership, was born in the thirties of last century, as were Calverly and Carroll. A lawyer, a captain of volunteers, a magistrate, he found himself as a contributor to the magazine *Fun,* in which his ballads over the signature "Bab" appeared. It is told by them of Poectesme how *Punch* rejected the great ballad *The Yarn of the "Nancy Bell,"* because it was too bloodthirsty: may its editors earn the burning immortality they deserve, for this deed! Gilbert became a prolific dramatist, and even a writer of short

stories; and then, in 1871, began the partnership with the composer Sir Arthur Sullivan (who could turn from the composition of *The Lost Chord* and *Onward Christian Soldiers* to the high frivolity of the light operas), a collaboration which lasted over twenty years. At the age of seventy-one Gilbert was given a knighthood; and the moral of that, I imagine, may be gleaned from the song *The Reward of Merit,* originally written for *Iolanthe.*

The *Bab Ballads* are in the most approved ballad style, and embody many of the quaint plot turn-overs that star the operas. The opening of the "Nancy Bell' story indicates this:

'Twas on the shores that round our coast
From Deal to Ramsgate span,
That I found alone on a piece of stone
An elderly naval man.

His hair was weedy, his beard was long,
And weedy and long was he,
And I heard this wight on the shore recite,
In a singular minor key:

"Oh, I am a cook and the captain bold,
And the mate of the *Nancy* brig,
And a bo'sun tight, and a midshipmite,
And the crew of the captain's gig."

The story marches bravely on to its anthropophagous conclusion. There are so many memorable rhymes—*Captain Reece, The Rival Curates, The Bishop and the Busman, The Bishop of Rum-ti-Foo, Gentle Alice Brown, The Bumboat*

Woman's Story, the gorgeously pattered *Lost Mr. Blake*—the line apparently cannot avoid stretching on to the crack of doom; broken by such lyrics as the invocation *To the Terrestrial Globe* "By a Miserable Wretch," concluding:

> Roll on, thou ball, roll on!
> Through seas of inky air
> Roll on!
> It's true I've got no shirts to wear;
> It's true my butcher's bill is due;
> It's true my prospects all look blue—
> But don't let that unsettle you!
> Never *you* mind!
> Roll on!
>
> (*It rolls on.*)

It should be emphasized that this material was drawn on, by Gilbert, for many of the plots and characteristics, and indeed for some of the delightful rhymes, that reappear in the operas.

When we come to them, th' approving tongue is dumbed by the number of glorious examples of light verse. Constant revivals prove their perennial freshness; and while, according to the sage *Britannica, Princess Ida, Patience, The Yeomen of the Guard, Pinafore, Ruddigore, The Gondoliers,* and *The Mikado* are each, for weighty reasons, the favorite, to me *Iolanthe,* for its sheer rhyming dexterity, is the zenith. Perhaps it would be wiser to say, with Adolph Wolff, "I love them all"—I refer to the operas, and not the objects of Mr. Wolff's adorations, my attitude

toward which has nothing to do with a study of versification.

Never was satire done more adroitly, and with more outrageous good humor, than in the hands of this lord of the lightsome pen. Take—

> When Britain really ruled the waves—
> (In good Queen Bess's time)
> The House of Peers made no pretence
> To intellectual eminence,
> Or scholarship sublime;
> Yet Britain won her proudest bays
> In good Queen Bess's glorious days! . . .
>
> And while the House of Peers withholds
> Its legislative hand,
> And noble statesmen do not itch
> To interfere in matters which
> They do not understand,
> As bright will shine Great Britain's rays,
> As in King George's glorious days!

Take—

> When in that house M. P.'s divide,
> If they've a brain and cerebellum, too,
> They've got to leave that brain outside,
> And vote just as their leaders tell 'em to.
> But then the prospect of a lot
> Of statesmen, all in close proximity,
> A-thinking for themselves, is what
> No man can face with equanimity,

both from *Iolanthe;* "He is an Englishman," from *H. M. S. Pinafore,*

For he might have been a Roosian,
A French, or Turk, or Proosian,
Or perhaps Itali-an!
But in spite of all temptations
To belong to other nations,
He remains an Englishman!

or, from the same opera, the glorious spoof song ending,

Stick close to your desks and *never go to sea,*
And you all may be Rulers of the Queen's Navee!

The delicious wither of his satire blasts away, the flowery barb of his spearing pen impales, kings, dukes and duchesses, major generals, lord chancellors, curates, and all sorts of weird human excrescences on the body social; and *Patience,* with its joyful crucifixion of the esthete—

Be eloquent in praise of the very dull old days which have long since passed away,
And convince 'em, if you can, that the reign of Good Queen Anne was Culture's palmiest day.
Of course you will pooh-pooh whatever's fresh and new, and declare it's crude and mean,
And that Art stopped short in the cultivated court of the Empress Josephine,

and the culminating stanza, which picks out Oscar Wilde and annihilates him in one Gargantuan blast of delightful verse, shows merely another facet of the glittering genius of this writer. Study the finale of Act I of *Iolanthe* for his verse at its peak; for it exhibits the potentialities in the devices of light verse as few other examples can. The opening movement shows Iolanthe, the fairy mother of

Strephon, assuring him (alas, in the hearing also of his jealous sweetheart Phyllis and her earlish suitors):

Iolanthe: When tempests wreck thy bark,
And all is drear and dark,
If thou shouldst need an ark,
I'll give thee one.
Phyllis (*aside*): What was that?
Lord Tolloller: I heard the minx remark
She'd meet him after dark
Within St. James's Park,
And give him one.

In and out moves the rhyming, with the Lord Chancellor and the whole Chorus of Fairies on hand to bring on the climax. And then the great rhythm:

Strephon: The lady of my love has caught me talking to another.
All: Oh fie! Strephon is a rogue!
Strephon: I tell her very plainly that the lady is my mother.
All: Taradiddle! taradiddle! tol-lol-lay!
Strephon: She won't believe my statement, and declares we must be parted
Because on a career of double-dealing I have started;
Then gives her hand to one of these, and leaves me broken-hearted.
All: Taradiddle! taradiddle! tol-lol-lay!

Then a new weaving of the verse, and the Lord Chancellor comes to grips with the Queen of the Fairies:

Go away, madam!
I should say, madam,
You display, madam,
Shocking taste.

It is rude, madam,
To intrude, madam,
With your brood, madam,
Brazen-faced!

At the end of his insulting disquisition, the furious queen launches from her fairy portals all of her thunders, upon the head of a repentant Chancellor, who mourns:

A plague on this vagary!
I'm in a nice quandary:
Of hasty tone
With dames unknown
I ought to be more chary.
It seems she is a fairy
From Andersen's library,
When I took her for
The proprietor
Of a ladies' seminary.

Then comes the itemized list of the details of the fairy curse, with Strephon in Parliament, and a Bolshevik upturn of everything, until, in the end, when titles of nobility have been made far more common than carbuncles,

Peers shall teem in Christendom,
And a duke's exalted station
Be attainable by com-
Petitive examination.

The thing to note is the amazing variety of the rhythms; the naturalness of the wording; and the brilliant control of rhyme and the other devices of light-versifying.

England's roll of deftness in light verse is far longer

than any mere score of names. Arthur H. Clough, with his *Spectator ab Extra* (with the refrain 'How pleasant it is to have money, heigh-ho!); Canning, with his *Song by Rogero,* mounting with Gilbertian ardor to its conclusion,

> Sun, moon, and thou vain world, adieu,
> That kings and priests are plotting in;
> Here doomed to starve on water-gru-
> -el, never shall I see the U-
> -niversity of Gottingen!—
> -niversity of Gottingen!

Sir Owen Seamen, whose name almost synonyms these latter days with Punch, a peer among parodists, as this stanza from his *"Sweet Uses of Obesity"* establishes—

> O profuse and imposing and passive,
> O dame of the devious waist,
> Whose circuit, amorphous and massive,
> These arms could have never embraced,
> You may puff, it is true, like a porpoise,
> And heave like a wallowing hulk,
> Yet your heart is as big as your corpus,
> Our Lady of Bulk!

Robert Louis Stevenson's far-flung children's verses are wide favorites; and G. K. Chesterton cannot avoid satire that stings, as in his *Song of Education: II. Geography: Form 17955301, Sub-Section Z:*

> Our principal exports, all labelled and packed,
> At the ends of the earth are delivered intact:
> Our soap or our salmon can travel in tins
> Between the two poles and as like as two pins;

So that Lancashire merchants whenever they like
Can water the beer of a man in Klondike
Or poison the meat of a man in Bombay;
And that is the meaning of Empire Day.

and the whole uproarious gamut of singing in *The Flying Inn,* including his *Song Against Songs:*

The song of the sorrow of Melisande is a weary song and a dreary song,
The glory of Mariana's grange has got into great decay,
The song of the Raven Never More has never been called a cheery song,
And the brightest things in Baudelaire are anything else but gay.

But who will write us a riding song,
Or a hunting song or a drinking song,
Fit for them that arose and rode,
When day and the wine were red?
But bring me a quart of claret out
And I will write you a clinking song,
A song of war and a song of wine
And a song to wake the dead.

Nothing can be more delicious than a later line in the same philuppic, "The song of the cheerful Shropshire Kid I consider a perfectly horrid song." And there is that refrain of Noah's, from the same book, "I don't care where the water goes, If it doesn't get into the wine,"—Chesterton is constantly one of the masters, not in the polite and genteel school of Calverly and Seaman, but in the swashbuckling mood of the greater satirists, who demolish their

adversaries with a most Christian smile on the face of the satirist. And, most recently of all, there is A. A. Milne, whose *When We Were Very Young* and *Now We Are Six* have demonstrated how light verse may be a very lion in the publisher's selling department. Here we have another of the masters, with a wallet-full of versifying devices closer akin to Mother Goose's full store than any writer since that esteemed dame has exhibited. Take the inerrant music of—

I had a penny,
A bright new penny,
I took my penny
To the market square.
I wanted a rabbit,
A little brown rabbit,
And I looked for a rabbit
'Most everywhere.

For I went to the stall where they sold sweet lavender
(*Only a penny for a bunch of lavender!*)
"Have you got a rabbit, 'cos I don't want lavender?"
But they hadn't got a rabbit, not anywhere there.

or the glorious song commencing,

The King asked
The Queen, and
The Queen asked
The Dairymaid:
"Could we have some butter for
The Royal slice of bread?"
The Queen asked

The Dairymaid,
The Dairymaid
Said, "Certainly,
I'll go and tell
The cow
Now
Before she goes to bed."

Here we are back in that homely hour when it was needful that even a Queen of Hearts make her own tarts, a Wessex King devise his own bread-pudding. The saga of the missing mousie; the "three little foxes Who didn't wear stockings and they didn't wear sockses;" the tremendous tragedy of James James Morrison Morrison Weatherby George Dupree's mother; the story of the elephant, the lion, the goat, and the snail; and so many more that Mr. Milne might think I were trying to cash in by reprinting his title page—these are enduring light verses. The second volume is as notable, with such diagnostic reports as:

Christopher Robin
Had wheezles
And sneezles,
They bundled him
Into
His bed.
They gave him what goes
With a cold in the nose,
And some more for a cold
In the head.
They wondered
If wheezles

Could turn
Into measles,
If sneezles
Would turn
Into mumps;
They examined his chest
For a rash,
And the rest
Of his body for swellings and lumps.

A great many writers thought that this versifying sounded easy; and, as sounds go, perhaps it does. But O what a deceitful sound it is, if it does! For this is as difficult to achieve as an ode by Keats; different, let us grant, but as difficult. And the result is as worthy; and, among the laureates of children and for children you will find the names of Edward Lear, Lewis Carroll, and A. A. Milne outlasting the monuments of powerful princes of rhyme. And I, for one, have not the slightest intention of so growing up that I am ever excluded from that sunlit room. I have recommended both books to my grandfather, whose third childhood is entitled to something just like this

Among the Redskins.—America had, from the start, its wealth—in number, that is—of light versifiers; but their nineteenth century standard was not, at first, everything that could be desired. We had grace-notes from Thomas Bailey Aldrich, Frank Dempster Sherman, H. C. Bunner —especially the latter's masterly parodies, as instance this perversion of Walt Whitman's rendition of *Home Sweet Home*—we give a few of the jewels—

You over there, young man with the guide-book, red-bound, covered flexibly with red linen,
Come here, I want to talk with you; I, Walt, the Manhattanese, citizen of these States, call you. . . .
Come with me. I will give you a good time; I will give you all the Venice you want, and most of the Paris.
I, Walt, I call to you. I am all on deck! Come and loaf with me! Let me tote you around by the elbow and show you things.
You listen to my ophicleide!
Home! . . .

The brown-stone house; the father coming home worried from a bad day's business; the wife meets him in the marble-paved vestibule; she throws her arms about him; she presses him close to her; she looks him full in the face with affectionate eyes; the frown from his brow disappearing.
Darling, she says, *Johnny has fallen down and cut his head; the cook is going away, and the boiler leaks. . . .*

The sound of the husband's voice on the still night air—he is singing: *We won't go home till morning!*—the wife arising, toward the wood-shed hastily going, stealthily entering, the voice all the time coming nearer, inebriate, chantant.
The wood-shed; the club behind the door of the wood-shed; the wife annexing the club; the husband approaching, always inebriate, chantant.
The husband passing the door of the wood-shed; the club over his head, now with his head in contact; the sudden cessation of the song; the temperance pledge signed the next morning; the benediction of peace over the domestic foyer temporarily resting. . . .

This is the whipping cream of parody. For here we have all of Walt's mannerisms caught, and, most appalling of

all, his very attitude, that shoulder-stretching democracy, hooked through the gills. Earlier than this had come Irwin Russell, of New Orleans, that masterly precursor in the field of Negro dialect poetry, with such triumphs as *Nebuchadnezzar* and the songs studding *Christmas Night in the Quarters,* such as the fiddler's call:

> *Git yo' pardners, fust kwattillion!*
> Stomp yo' feet, an' raise 'em high;
> Tune is: "Oh! dat water-million!
> Gwine to git home byme-by."
> *S'lute yo' pardners!*—scrape perlitely—
> Don't be bumpin' gin de res'—
> *Balance all!*—now, step out rightly;
> Alluz dance yo' lebbel bes'.
> *Fo'wa'd foah!*—whoop up, niggers!
> *Back ag'in!*—don't be so slow!—
> *Swing cornahs!—min' de figgers!*
> When I hollers den yo' go.
> *Top ladies cross ober!*
> Hol', on, till I takes a dram—
> *Gemmen solo!*—yes, I's sober—
> Cain't say how de fiddle am.

The vast field of Negro folk verses was accumulating all the time, with such little masterpieces as *Simon Slick's Mule:*

> Dere wuz a liddle kickin' man.
> His name wuz Simon Slick.
> He had a mule wid cherry eyes.
> Oh, how dat mule could kick! . . .

An', Suh, w'en you go up to him,
He shet one eye an' smile;
Den he telegram his foot to you,
An' sen' you half a mile!

and this astringent saga of connubial bliss, *The Newly Weds:*

First Month: "Set down in my cabin, Honey!
Second Month: Stan' up, my Pie."
Third Month: "You go to wu'k, you Wench!
You well to wu'k as I!"

Later came Paul Laurence Dunbar, with his exquisite music:

When de fiddle gits to singin' out a ol' Vahginny reel,
An' you 'mence to feel a ticklin' in yo' toe an in yo' heel
Ef you t'ink you got 'uhligion an' you wants to keep it, too,
You jes' bettah tek a hint an' git yo'se'f clean out o' view.
Case de time is mighty temptin' when de chune is in de swing
Fuh a darky, saint or sinner man, to cut de pigeon-wing,
An' you couldn't he'p f'um dancin' ef yo' feet wuz boun' wif twine,
When Angelina Johnson comes a-swingin' down de line.

as well as John Wesley Holloway, Joseph Seaman Cotter, James Edwin Campbell, James Weldon Johnson, and many more from the Aframerican singers. All of these are poets, in regular English, and light versifiers in dialect, as in this shining trifle of Johnson's, *An Explanation:*

"Look heah! 'Splain to me de reason
Why you said to Squire Lee,
Dere wuz twelve o' chicken thieves
In dis heah town, includin' me."

"Ef he tol' you dat, my brudder,
He said sump'n dat warn't true;
W'at I said wuz dis, dat dere wuz
Twelve, *widout* includin' you."

"Oh! . . . !"

American writers of light verse grew legion in number, and constantly bettered in technique. Bret Harte's homely rhymes in Western dialect and John Hay's effective dialect *Pike County Ballads* gave place to the more universal appeal of Eugene Field and James Whitcomb Riley, who could both strum the mood of wonder out of their light-strung lutes. Then came the brilliance of Charlotte Perkins Gilman, displayed in such pieces as the story of the little eohippus, *Similar Cases;* the gayheart rhymes of Richard Hovey and Bliss Carman; Oliver Herford; Gelett Burgess, with his immortal quatrain above a world of delightful Goops,

I never saw a Purple Cow,
I never hope to see one;
But I can tell you, anyhow,
I'd rather see than be one.

Carolyn Wells; Burges Johnson, brilliant in his own right, and as collaborator with Gelett Burgess in what, to some, seems the greatest line of light verse ever written, the terminal of this quatrain from *Elegy in a City Backyard:*

Let not some groomed lap-cat e'er decry
The humble realm of that backyard obscure—
The battered gate, the clothes-line whence there fly
The short and simple flannels of the poor.

There is Arthur Guiterman, with his masterly *The Quest of the Ribband,* a chivalric saga of man in the modern department store; the delicious whimsey of "The Antiseptic Baby and the Prophylactic Pup"; and, most perfectly hewn of all, *A Pure Mathematician:*

Let Poets chant of Clouds and Things
In lonely attics!
A Nobler Lot is his, who clings
To Mathematics.

Sublime he sits, no Worldly Strife
His Bosom vexes,
Reducing all the Doubts of Life
To Y's and X's.

And naught to him's a Primrose on
The river's border;
A Parallelopipedon
Is more in order.

Let Zealots vow to do and dare
And right abuses!
He'd rather sit at home and square
Hypothenuses.

Along his straight-ruled paths he goes
Contented with 'em,
The only Rhythm that he knows,
A Logarithm.

His critical keenness never was phrased more aptly than in the second quatrain of *The Young Celtic Poets:*

For the Young Gaels of Ireland
Are the lads that drive me mad:
For half their words need foot-notes,
And half their rhymes are bad.

He is at home in any light mood, and soars into the more serious realm of poetry at times, without interference from the critical traffic officers who guard it.

And there are the Carryls, Charles E. and his son Guy Wetmore. The father was the author of *Davy and the Goblin,* starred with songs like the perennial favorite, *A Capital Ship for an Ocean Trip.* The son, in the three volumes, *Fables for the Frivolous, Mother Goose for Grown Ups,* and *Grimm Tales Made Gay,* embroidered Aesop, Elizabeth Vertigoose, and the brothers Grimm until it would make the original authors dizzy to try and keep tab on the tripping rhymes. Carryl is as facile a rhymester as ever lived, and a scintillant originator of light verse patterns that peer with Calverly's for effectiveness, and use, instead of the high art of Calverly's tight rhymes, an unparalleled elaboration of rhyming devices. His tags of morals pun irresistibly; his stanza models are the best in the trade. Take this opening of the Little Bow Peep story:

Though she was only a shepherdess
Tending the meekest of sheep,
Never was African leopardess
Crosser than Little Bow Peep:
Quite apathetic, impassible
People described her as: "That
Wayward, contentious, irascible,
Testy, cantakerous brat!"

For a more elaborate pattern, *The Commendable Castigation of Old Mother Hubbard* preludes,

She was one of those creatures
Whose features
Are hard beyond any reclaim;
And she loves in a hovel
To grovel,
And she hadn't a cent to her name.
She owned neither gallants
Nor talents,
She borrowed extensively, too,
From all of her dozens
Of cousins,
And never refunded a *sou*:
Yet all they said in abuse of her
Was: "She is prouder than Lucifer!"
(That, I must say, without meaning to blame,
Is always the way with that kind of a dame!)

Each poem preserves its stanza form, with meticulous fidelity, to the end. Toward the end of *The Harmonious Heedlessness of Little Boy Blue* we are learning:

"Most idle ass of all your class,"
The farmer said with scorn,
"Just see, my son, what you have done!
The cows are in the corn!
"Oh drat," he said, "the brat!" he said.
The cowherd seemed to rouse.
"My friend, it's worse than that," he said,
"The corn is in the cows."

THE MORAL lies before our eyes.
When tending kine and corn,
Don't spend your noons in tooting tunes
Upon a blatant horn:
Or scaling, and assailing, and
With energy immense,
Your cows will take a railing, and
The farmer take offense.

In the last of the three volumes, the stanza used in the Bluebeard story has already become classic:

A maiden from the Bosphorus,
With eyes as bright as phosphorus,
Once wed the wealthy bailiff
Of the caliph
Of Kelat.
Though diligent and zealous, he
Became a slave to jealousy.
(Considering her beauty,
'Twas his duty
To be that!)

And I am not sure that Carryl ever did better than in his retelling of *Puss-in-Boots.* Put him just after Sirius and Canopus. . . .

The newspaper colyum became one of the chief homes of America's light versifiers. B. L. T., the celebrated "conductor" of the *Line o' Type* column in the *Chicago Tribune,* shines with the brightest in this field; and Franklin P. Adams, of the New York *Mail, Tribune,* and *World* successively has run, with impressive impertinence, the

whole gamut of elegant verse. His easy perfection of line appears from *Us Potes:*

Swift was sweet on Stella;
Poe had his Lenore;
Burns's fancy turned to Nancy
And a dozen more.

Pope was quite a trifler,
Goldsmith was a case;
Byron'd flirt with any skirt
From Liverpool to Thrace.

Sheridan philandered;
Shelley, Keats, and Moore
All were there with some affair
Far from lit'rachoor.

Fickle is the heart of
Each immortal bard.
Mine alone is made of stone—
Gotta work too hard.

Dorothy Parker is a facile performer, with a tendency toward sentimentality. Yet she is popular and amusing:

Authors and actors and artists and such
Never know nothing, and never know much.
Sculptors and singers and those of their kidney
Tell their affairs from Seattle to Sidney.
Playwrights and poets and such horses' necks
Start off from anywhere, end up at sex. . . .
People Who Do Things exceed my endurance;
God, for a man that solicits insurance!

Samuel Hoffenstein is most of all the rhymester of the modern city—that is, of New York City. He has a deplorably androcentric view toward woman:

> When you're away, I'm restless, lonely,
> Wretched, bored, dejected; only
> Here's the rub, my dearling dear,
> I feel the same when you are here.

Yet at times he is more tolerantly receptive:

> Maid of Gotham, ere we part,
> Have a hospitable heart—
> Since our own delights must end,
> Introduce me to your friend.

He is most at home in the actual speech rhythms of the city, as in:

> You buy yourself a new suit of clothes;
> The care you give it, God only knows;
> The material, of course, is the very *best* yet;
> You get it pressed and pressed and *pressed* yet;
> You keep it free from specks *so* tiny—
> What thanks do you get? The pants get shiny. . . .

> Your life's a wreck; you're tired of living,
> Of lending, spending, borrowing, giving;
> Of doubt and fear, of hope and question,
> Of women, children, and digestion;
> There isn't a single dream you cherish—
> You simply pine and pray to perish.
> You haven't the nerve to take bichloride,
> But you stay up nights till you're gaunt and sore-eyed;

You don't eat greens, as the doctors tell you,
And you drink the very worst they sell you;
You've earned, at least, let's say, cirrhosis—
And what do you get for it? Halitosis!

One more excerpt, this time from a long ribald ode:

I yodel a bachelor life;
I sing of the joys of the single;
I scoff at a man with a wife,
And laugh at the thought that they mingle. . . .

I am free of the fear of the wed
(For the female's capricious in temper)
That, at last, the inviolate bed
Will enact the familiar *sic semper*. . . .

I am absolute lord of my time;
I am master and mate of the minute;
And—wait till I finish this rhyme—
A hell of a lot there is in it!

This verse is, as a rule, splendidly well-wrought. It is not uniform in excellence, but a line of the simplicity of

You haven't the nerve to take bichloride.

is as ultimate in utterance as the most aspiring could wish; and, if you think it is easy to do, attempt to catch the speech idioms of the city, as Hoffenstein has done, and compare your product with his. If you admire the city as he does, if you esteem its gasoliny halitosis above the atmosphere engendered of remote wooded places, you will take this to your heart.

Louis Untermeyer is among the most facile of America's parodists; and at times, as in his parody of William Rose Benét in "—*And Other Poets,*" ("All the way to Guadaloupe, round the Horn and back again") he achieves a poem which can rank with its model. And Don Marquis, the leisurely deus of the first *Sun Dial* column, is quite as great as any of these, whether he be sonneting his red-haired lady, or treating of Archie the Cockroach and Mehitabel the Cat, or dealing with "Noah and Jonah and Captain John Smith," or trailing Hermione into Greenwich Village:

I visited, one night of late,
Thought's Underworld, the Brainstorm Slum,
The land of Futile Piffledom;
A salon weird where congregate
Freak, Nut and Bug and Psychic Bum.

There, there they sit and cerebrate:
The fervid Pote who never potes,
Great Artists, Male or She, that Talk,
But scorn the Pigment and the Chalk,
And Cubist sculptors wild as goats.
Theosophists and Swamis, too. . . .
Tame Anarchists, a dreary crew,
Squib Socialists too damp to sosh,
Fake Hobohemians steeped in suds,
Glib Females in Artistic Duds
With Captive Husbands cowed and gauche. . . .

A rat-faced Idiot Boy who slimes
White paper o'er with metric crimes—

He is a kind of Burbling Blear
Who warbles Sex Slush sad to hear
And mocks God in his stolen rhymes
And wears a ruby in one ear—
Murmured to me: "My Golden Soul
Drinks Song from out a Crystal Bowl. . . .
Drinks Love and Song . . . my Golden Soul!"
I let him live. There were no bricks,
Or even now that Golden Soul
Were treading water in the Styx. . . .

I heard. . . . I heard it proved that night
That Fire is Cold, and Black is White,
That Junk is Art, and Art is Junk,
That Virtue's wrong, and Vice is right,
That Death is Life, and Life is Death,
That Breath is Rocks, and Rocks are Breath:—
The cheap and easy paradox
The Fool springs, hoping that it shocks.

Brain-sick, I stumbled to the street
And drooled unto a kindly Cop:
"Since moons have feathers on their feet,
Why is your headgear perched on top?
And if you Scorn the Commonplace,
Why wear a Nose upon your Face?
And since Pythagoras is mute
On Sex Hygiene and Cosmic Law,

Is your Blonde Beast as Bland a Brute,
As Blind a Brute, as Bernard Shaw?
No doubt, when drilling through the parks,
With Ibsen's Ghost and Old Doc Marx,
You've often seen two Golden Souls
Drink Suds and Sobs from Crystal Bowls?"

"I ain't," he says, "I ain't, Old Kid,
And I would pinch 'em if I did!"

"Thank God," I said, "for this, at least:
The world, in spots, is well policed!"

The Moods of Light Verse.—Something has been said already upon the chief moods in which light and humorous verses are written; and examples have been given in each of these moods. Most frothy of all is *vers de société,* that *occasional verse* or elegant verse upon which we have let Locker-Lampson speak at some length. *Satirical verse,* whether used (in dialect) by Lowell in his *Bigelow Papers,* or in the more classical utterances of Juvenal, Horace, Voltaire, Pope, Dryden, and Byron, veers from the mere didactic to impassioned iconoclasm: it is the follies, shams, snobberies, man-reared divinities that it pierces. *Humorous verse* trudges homelily far below the clouds that scorn inhabits, and often adopts dialect as its metier. The misadventures of Tam-o'-Shanter, as Burns tells them, are humorous poetry, and neighbor acceptably his love songs and other lyrics. *Punning verse,* as in the ballad given from Hood, and in the morals of Carryl, is perennially popular; and such forms as the limerick thrive upon it. Often punning verse appears in *newspaper chain verse,* where each newspaper's versifier adds a stanza in the pattern set by the first, as in:

When many fiction writers try
  Their thoughts to give us hot,
We get e-rot-ic novels, with
  The accent on the rot.—*Lippincott's Magazine*

When some hair-dressers seek to give
  Us hair to fit the hat,
We get er-rat-ic coiffures, with
  The accent on the rat.
—Boston *Traveler*

And when the fisher leaves the pool
  And gladly home does hie,
We get some li-kely stories, with
  The accent on the lie.
—Topeka *Capital*

If I were a copy-reader, forced
  To suffer such attacks,
Some poet would get an ax-sent,
  With the accent on the ax.
—*Lippincott's Magazine*

Dialect verse has been exhibited, in the better work of writers in Negro dialect. This requires more intelligence than eight out of ten users of the speech possess. Take this, for example:

Sum niggers iz peculyer,
I reitteratez agen,
They mus' cum f'um Atlanta,
An' not from Bummin'ham.

This exhibits the typical faulty dialect that many write. Thus *sum* is not a dialect pronunciation of *some,* but the correct pronunciation. *Iz* is the correct pronunciation, not a dialect perversion, of *is; cum,* of *come; agen,* of *again;* and *reitteratez,* in all probability, of *reiterates.* Also, if

peculyer is pronounced with the usual *u* sound, this is the correct pronunciation of *peculiar;* if not, it is still not in proper Negro dialect form. Also, why use *f'um* and *from* in the same poem, both to represent *from?* Consistency is no vice here. A similar fault, in another field, is using *you* and *thou* in the same poem, to designate the same person. *F'um, mus'* and *an'* are correct dialect. These warnings apply, of course, with equal force to writing dialect prose. If the examples given from Russell, Dunbar and Johnson are observed, it will be found that their dialect vocabulary is, in general, accurately chosen. One other caution may be valuable. It is impossible, in general, to put every word in dialect, even though, to careful ears, every word pronounced by the character you are using is pronounced a trifle differently. The reason is that, in proportion as the amount of your dialect increases, the piece becomes more and more unreadable and unintelligible. With great wisdom James Weldon Johnson, in the fine Negro sermons in his *God's Trombones,* proceeds in this fashion:

> And God stepped out on space,
> And He looked around and said,
> "I'm lonely—
> I'll make me a world."

and again, in another of the sermons,

> And God said: Go down, Death, go down,
> Go down to Savannah, Georgia,
> Down in Yamacraw,
> And find Sister Caroline.

She's borne the burden and heat of the day,
She's labored long in my vineyard,
And she's tired,—
She's weary—
Go down, Death, and bring her to me.

This is written by a master of dialect verse, and in an idiom definitely true of the Negro preacher—a blend of the old tune of the King James Bible, welded to the natural music of the Negro race. The reader can interpret it with his own dialect, or can read it straight, with just a hint of the dialect; and it is quite as effective as if *Jawja, Gawd, fin', Cal'line* had been used. Vachel Lindsay's *Simon Legree* and a few lines in the *Congo* are written in straight English where dialect should be supplied by the reader; but, if the writer is at all uncertain of the dialect, this is better than writing dialect badly.

Parody is an art in itself, ranging from mere adoption of the patterns of another, to a mimicry of his phrasings, and, in the highest sense, of his sense as well. Carolyn Wells names these three types of parody: word-rendering, form-rendering, and sense-rendering, and the terms serve adequately. Word-rendering is in reality a form of burlesque, as in the line given from Burges Johnson and Gelett Burgess,

The short and simple flannels of the poor.

Any well-known poem may be travestied in this fashion, with amusing results, depending on the immediate recognition of the model, and the width of the chasm between

its meaning and the meaning of the travesty. There is an old popularization of Antony's speech, commencing:

> Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears,
> I will return them next Saturday,

and so on; and variants like "To sneeze or not to sneeze, that is the question" come into the same elementary category.

According to Miss Wells, word-rendering consists in the mere substitution of a trivial motive for the original serious one; form-rendering, in the imitation of the style of an author, preferably an author given to mannerisms; and sense-rendering, utilizing both the author's style and his typical themes, carried out as the original author would have done so. This third must, of course, not be a mere echo of its original: at its best, it must contain a critical interpretation of the author, by subtly exaggerating both the matter of style and theme. And yet these fences will not entirely enclose the field of parody. Louis Untermeyer parodies exquisitely; but when he reaches Guy Wetmore Carryl, and proceeds to have him do over the story of "Jack Spratt could eat no fat,"

> Of all the mismated pairs ever created
> The worst of the lot were the Spratts.
> Their life was a series of quibbles and queries
> And quarrels and squabbles and spats.
> They argued at breakfast, they argued at tea,
> And they argued from midnight to quarter past three.

Even attributing this to Owen Seaman, as a parody of Carryl, will not do; it is every whit as good as one of

Carryl's own pieces. When Untermeyer comes to let William Rose Benet do "Four and twenty blackbirds," *The Slave Trader's Chantey,* the result is even more astonishing; for, with due regard to the excellence of Benet's *Merchants of Cathay* and other chants, this, in the eyes of many, equals any of them:

All the way to Guadaloupe, around the horn and back again,
Shores that seem a dusky dream of ebony and spice;
Shifting of our cargoes there and out upon the track again,
Loaded down with black and brown and magic merchandise.
Isfahan and Hindustan, we leave 'em all in peace again,
Up the straits and through the gates of hell itself we roar,
For now we hold the talisman, we've found the Golden Fleece again;
Slaves are what we're after—and we've shipped a hundred more!

CHORUS

So, sing a song of bank-notes, a cabin full of rye;
Four and ninety blackbirds for any man to buy;
Four and ninety blackbirds jammed into the hold,
And we're the mystic merchants, for we turn 'em into gold!

And the second stanza is as singing as the first. Bunner, in the parody on Whitman already quoted, was writing parody in the third class—the critical interpretation class, utilizing all of the tricks of speech and thought of his master; but his theme was amusingly lighter than Whitman's. Here Untermeyer's theme is not light; it is creative parody, a sort of pre-posthumous revisiting of the poet's spirit, which settles upon the parodist for a briefly successful session.

Nonsense verse, after the examples given from Lear and Carroll, needs no further elucidation. It is perhaps the hardest mood of all to imitate or feign. There are various moods of *whimsical verse,* as when the lines imitate a person with a cold. Then there is *composite* or *mosaic verse,* when the lines are selected from one poet or a number, and rearranged to form an amusing pattern. *Macaronic verse* (and these terms are unimportant: the thing of value is their potential suggestiveness, to future versifiers) consists of the mingling of two or more languages. Here is a horrendous example:

In tempus old a hero lived,
Qui loved puellae deux;
He ne pouvait pas quite to say
Which one amabat mieux.

Enjoyment of this is restricted to those familiar with the two or more languages utilized; otherwise, much of the product remains Greek to the reader, or worse. Again, *archaic verse* is merely a parody of the speech of them of old time, as in this somewhat heavy limerick classic:

When that Seinte George hadde sleyne ye draggon,
He sate him downe furninst a flaggon;
And, wit ye well,
It soon befell
He had a bien pleasaunt jag on.

Shaped whimsies are poems whose very shapes follow, typographically, the themes. Here is an elaborate example, *Song of the Decanter,* by Warfield Creath Richardson,

which enjoyed a wide, and at times anonymous, fame as an argument for temperance:

SONG OF THE DECANTER

There was an old decanter
and its mouth was gaping
wide; the rosy wine had
ebbed away and left
its crystal side: and
the wind went
h u m m i n g—
humming up
and down: the
wind it flew,
and through
the reed-like
hollow neck
the wildest
notes it blew.
I placed it in
the window,
where the blast
was blowing free, and
fancied that its pale mouth
sang the queerest strains to me.
"They tell me—puny conquerors! the
Plague has slain his ten, and war his
hundred thousand of the very best of men;
but I"—'twas thus the Bottle spake—"but I have
conquered more than all your famous conquerors, so
feared and famed of yore. Then come, ye youths, and
maidens, all, come drink from out my cup, the beverage
that dulls the brain, and burns the spirits up; that
puts to shame your conquerors that slay their scores
below; for this has deluged millions with the lava
tide of woe. Tho' in the path of battle darkest
streams of blood may roll: yet while I killed
the body, I have damned the very soul.
The cholera, the plague, the sword
such ruin never wrought, as I in
mirth or malice on
the innocent have
brought. And
still I breathe
upon them, and they
shrink before my breath,
while year by year my thou-
sands go my dusty way of death."

A simpler example is furnished by Charles C. Jones, in a tribute to his pipe, *A Friend in Need:*

This is
that
old
and
fra-
grant
friend
which makes my
life worth while!
Sweet peace it's very
sure to lend, till I
find worry's at an
end, and stretch
back with a
smile.

Various forms of *typographical oddities* may be devised, in which certain of the lines (as the terminals of each quatrain) represent the way a person walks, sober, or intoxicated, or the way he falls down, or anything else that type may be made to portray. Franklin P. Adams has wrung much amusement out of alternating the various named types in typographical offices; and has also utilized the railroad time-table with devasting effectiveness, in *Signal Service:*

Time-table! Terrible and hard
To figure! At some station lonely
We see this sign upon the card:
*

* Train 20: Stops on signal only.

We read thee wrong; the untrained eye
  Does not see always with precision.
The train we thought to travel by
†

Again, undaunted, we look at
  The hieroglyphs, and as a rule a
Small double dagger shows us that
‡

And when we take a certain line
  On Tues., Wednes., Thurs., Fri., Sat., or Monday,
We're certain to detect the sign:
§

And this is only half of what F. P. A. has to say on the subject.

Acrostics are verses where the opening letter of each line, or the closing letters, or letters arrived at by some other system, name a person, or convey a special message. George Washington perpetrated this acrostic, which establishes that, as a versifier, he no doubt made a fine president:

*F*rom your bright sparkling Eyes I was undone;
*R*ays, you have; more transparent than the Sun,
*A*midst its glory in the rising Day
*N*one can you equal in your bright array;
*C*onstant in your calm and unspotted Mind;
*E*qual to all, but will to none Prove kind,

† Runs only on North-west division.
‡ Train does not stop at Ashtabula.
§ $10 extra fare ex. Sunday.

*S*o knowing, seldome one so Young, you'll Find,
*A*h! woe's me, that I should Love and conceal
*L*ong have I wished, but never dared reveal,
*E*ven though severely Love's Pains I feel;
*X*erxes that great, wasn't free from Cupid's Dart,
*A*nd all the great Heroes, felt the smart.

Poe was fond of this amusement, preferring to conceal his acrostic in the first letter of the first line, the second letter of the second, and so on. A dozen other less meritorious devices have occurred, such as writing riddles, anagrams, charades, and palindromes (reversible messages, which read the same both way, such as, *Madam, I'm Adam,* or the more amazing *Paget saw an Irish tooth, sir, in a waste gap,* both of which have been versified); writing alphabets in verse; using echo verses, whose terminal lines echo, with a change of meaning, the conclusion of the preceding line; tongue twisters, like "Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers"; verses which alter their meaning, when the lines are read differently; and half a dozen more. But these are relatively unimportant; the major fields have been dealt with.

In writing light verse, only one thing is unforgivable: and that is slovenliness and mediocrity of performance. Technical mastery is hardly more difficult than that of serious poetry; and, out of the very essays, something enduring may result.

BOOK V GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

BOOK V GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

Craftsmanship in the Masters.—Now that we have completed our survey of the whole craft of versifying, it is time to take a panoramic view of verse, in practice, as the masters used it. For a study of their technique, in amending and excising lines that limped in inept feet, and words that failed to phrase in fulness the inevitable music that their inner ears dictated—this should be a chore of value. Never a poet who treasured sincerity failed, as he aged and matured in poetical stature, to lift from a young mediocrity toward some sincerer, less patterned achievement. Let us glance at a few of the many, who grew into freedom, away from a juvenile day full of rhyme and a tight-patterned lyrical flight, into rebel desire, and a craft to inspire, in its freedom, all of us who would win poetry.

We have said that the technique of verse is easy to master; and, to impress this upon the reader, we have descended into a trick. Glance again at the opening paragraph. In rhythm, is it prose—or verse? The opening follows a tight iambic pattern:

> Now that we have completed our survey
> Of the whole craft of versifying, it
> Is time to take a panoramic view
> Of verse in practice, as the masters used it.

From this, we shorten into the trochaic verse of Hiawatha:

> For a study of their technique
> In amending and excising
> Lines that limped in inept feet, and
> Words that failed to phrase in fulness
> The inevitable music
> That their inner ear dictated—
> This should be a chore of value.

Into dactylic four-foot measure—

> Never a poet who treasured sincerity
> Failed, as he aged and matured in poetical
> Stature, to lift from a young mediocrity
> Toward some sincerer, less patterned achievement.

At the end, we have anapestic four-foot form, with couplet rhymes at the end of every two feet—that is, between the center and the end of each line:

> Let us glance at a few of the many who grew
> Into freedom, away from a juvenile day
> Full of rhyme and a tight-patterned lyrical flight,
> Into rebel desire, and a craft to inspire,
> In its freedom, all we who would win poetry.

This was as easy to write as prose; and it could have been all rhymed, as the conclusion was, with no more difficulty. It is, of course, bad prose, because of the monotony of its rhythm, once the attention is directed at it; although perhaps the reader overlooked this at first reading. It is verse: but it is not poetry. It is a chasmed depth below poetry. Verse can be mastered by that superficial

servant, the intellect; poetry grows out of the deeps of one's nature; and it is in that sense that the proverb, "A poet is born, and not made," must be taken. A poet is born; but a master of the craft of versification—which is the craft of poetry—must be made, and, largely, self-made. Studies in poetics, like the present one, can be utilized to the fullest: but the aspiring self must do the utilizing.

This lesson the poets have known. And you are asked now to survey briefly the aspect of their development: from what they studied, in published product, and what height they ascended, in the end. If we can discover a similar tendency in all of them, it should be of value in heartening us, in all our leanings toward a similar tendency.

John Livingston Lowes, in his *Convention and Revolt in Poetry,* has given several instances of the treatment of individual lines, by certain poets. In the midst of the second part of *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* Coleridge wrote first, and had printed in the *Lyrical Ballads,* this fine music:

> Nor dim nor red, like God's own head,
> The glorious Sun uprist:
> Then all averred, I had killed the bird
> That brought the fog and mist.
> 'Twas right, said they, such birds to slay,
> That bring the fog and mist.
>
> The fair breeze blew, the white foam flew,
> The furrow *followed free*;
> We were the first that ever burst
> Into that silent sea.

Down dropt the breeze, the sails dropt down,
'Twas sad as sad could be;
And we did speak only to break
The silence of the sea!

This lyrical passage is followed by four of the most singing stanzas, the most quoted passages, in the whole poem.

And then Coleridge's intellect set to work—and a critical old demon this intellect was, skilled in the idealistic metaphysics of German philosophy, and a stickler for strict accuracy. In *Sybilline Leaves,* which appeared later, Coleridge revised the underscored half line to read:

The furrow *stream'd off free.*

He appended a note to the revised line, explaining that, from shipboard, the wake seemed to flow away from the ship; only to those watching the ship from on shore or some other point of outside vantage did the furrow seem to "follow." Eleven years later, Coleridge restored the line to its first reading: realizing that the inspiration had been right, and the intellect wrong; that the line, as originally written, was inevitable in music, alliterative, assonantal, and exquisite; was, in fact, poetry; and that the altered line was not, or was poetry of a lesser flight.

Tennyson, in his early *The Miller's Daughter,* wrote the tenth and eleventh stanzas at first as follows:

Remember you that pleasant day
When, after roving in the woods,
(T'was April then) I came and lay
Beneath those gummy chestnutbuds

That glistened in the April blue
Upon the slope so smooth and cool,
I lay and never thought of *you*
But angled in the deep millpool.

A water-rat from off the bank
Plunged in the stream. With idle care,
Downlooking through the sedges rank,
I saw your troubled image there.
Upon the dark and dimpled beck
It wandered like a floating light,
A full fair form, a warm white neck,
And two white arms—how rosy white!

This was published at the age of twenty-three; and received a fusillade of severe criticism, as an earlier volume had done. The combined effect of these blasts of critical disapproval hushed Tennyson's writing for some ten years, during which he went over his early work with merciless severity. The trail of his critical revisions is written large in the copious appendix to the Cambridge edition of the poet's works. When the poem reappeared, ten years later, gone were the "*gummy* chestnutbuds"—what on earth had the gumminess of the buds to do with what the poet saw or felt or did? Gone was the water-rat, which—let it be fully confessed—in the version above is inextricably entangled with the lady's image in the pool. An intermediate stanza was added, and the three now appear:

But, Alice, what an hour was that,
When after roving in the woods
('Twas April then), I came and *sat*
Below the chestnuts, *when their* buds

Were glisten*ing to* the *breezy* blue;
And on the slope, *an absent fool,*
I *cast me down, nor* thought of you,
But angled in the *higher* pool.

A love-song I had somewhere read,
An echo from a measured strain,
Beat time to nothing in my head
From some odd corner of the brain.
It haunted me, the morning long,
With weary sameness in the rhymes,
The phantom of a silent song,
That went and came a thousand times.

Then leapt a trout. In lazy mood
I watch'd the little circles die;
They past into the level flood,
And there a vision caught my eye;
The reflex of a beauteous form,
A *glowing* arm, a *gleaming* neck,
As when a sunbeam wavers warm
Within the dark and dimpled beck.

This is by no means great poetry; but, if Tennyson could take such pains with a lower flight, it is clear that great poetry deserves as much pains, or more. The alterations have been put into italics, to show how extreme they were. More than a score of changes in the first stanza; the second stanza entirely new; and, of the original third stanza, only *form, arm,* and *neck* remaining. The original stanza two permitted no lapse of time, and flung the lady's image almost upon the tail of the water-rat's disappearing form.

In the latter version, we have the best stanza of the three (containing the fine line, "The phantom of a silent song") interpolated, to mark the passage of time, to vestibule the mood of the entrance of the girl; and we have the slower appearance of the girl's form, after the little ripples have died. So the masters labor over their lines.

Keats's *Hyperion* marked the topmost flight of his genius. Its marvelous opening is:

> Deep in the shady sadness of a vale
> Far sunken from the healthy breath of morn,
> Far from the fiery noon, and eve's one star,
> Sat gray-haired Saturn, quiet as a stone,
> Still as the silence round about his lair;
> Forest on forest hung about his head
> Like cloud on cloud. No stir of air was there,
> Not so much life as on a summer's day
> Robs not one light seed from the feathered grass,
> But where the dead leaf fell, there did it rest.

We have here the essence of the illusion of "utter stillness, remoteness, silence, majesty." But Keats wrote first, as Lowes points out, to take two lines only:

> Not so much life as a *young vulture's* wing
> Would spread upon a field of green-eared corn—

on second thought substituting for the vulture an eagle. But there the illusion of stillness is broken by a vulture's or an eagle's flight, and by the lift of the sensation of young green. And so Keats cancelled the lines, and wrote in the margin of his manuscript:

Not so much life as on a summer's day
Robs not at all *the dandelion's* fleece.

But again his critical intellect held that the dandelion's gay sunny gold snapped the spell of stillness: and, in the very proof sheets, the final harmony was captured forever, as the lines appear first above.

Nor, when the poem has been printed, need the poet's labor be over, as we saw in the case of Tennyson. Walt Whitman was a careful craftsman, for all of his essential ignorance of his own medium; and successive editions of *Leaves of Grass* show him ever shaping and whittling the lines toward a higher flight of song. When the magnificent threnody *Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking* first appeared, it was entitled, and had as its first line, *Out of the Rocked Cradle.* After the second line of the poem appeared this unneeded excrescence, which was eliminated:

Out of the boy's mother's womb, and from the nipples of her breasts.

The line

From those beginning notes of yearning and love there in the mist

first had "sickness and love," and modified "mist" by "transparent." The opening of the threnody was formerly:

Once, Paumanok,
When the snows had melted, and the Fifth Month grass was growing;

the later version lifts this to:

Once Paumanok,
When the lilac-scent was in the air and Fifth-month grass was growing.

The ninth line of the first carol ended, at first,

If we two but keep together.

Consider its bettered music in the later form:

Two together!
Winds blow south, or winds blow north,
Day come white, or night come black,
Home, or rivers and mountains from home,
Singing all time, minding no time,
While we two keep together.

The longer carol is amended repeatedly as effectively. And poem after poem by the strange old chanter was improved from year to year, until his hand-wrought vessels brimmed over with the word his heart desired to utter.

Walt Whitman was thirty-six when the first edition of *Leaves of Grass* appeared (1855). Between the ages of fifteen and twenty-three he had written poor prose and poorer verse, including these two stanzas from the unimpressive *Sailing the Mississippi at Midnight:*

Vast and starless, the pall of heaven
Laps on the trailing pall below;
And forward, forward, in solemn darkness,
As if to the sea of the lost we go. . . .

Steady, helmsman! you guide the immortal!
Many a wreck is beneath you piled,
Many a brave yet unwary sailor
Over these waters has been beguiled.

That second stanza contains much that poetry must have no commerce with. A Mississippi boat, such as the poet speaks of, was probably guided by a pilot, not a helmsman; he steered with a pilot's wheel, and not a helm. "Many a wreck" is a cliché; "is beneath you piled" is an inversion; the last line has another inversion, and has the poeticism "beguiled"; the third line is hackneyed. There is everything here except a living vision and a living vocabulary. Walt Whitman's progress in his art consisted in the one astounding leap from such tawdriness to the golden flow of the finer passages in the *Leaves.* This one leap he made, and he progressed (barring minor improvements in word-usage and music) no further; toward the end, he slipped backward in the technique which he used so facilely and understood so vaguely, as I have indicated in detail in *Poets of America.* But that one great forward leap was enough: at the one stride he stepped out of poeticisms, both in word-usage and in metric and stanzaic forms, and built his own and much of his country's future music. What he discarded was the crippling formal devices of poetry: what he discovered was the pot of gold of natural speech.

Where Shakespeare began, and where he ended, are matter of general knowledge. In *The Comedy of Errors* we start with a rhyming couplet, and proceed to lines dominantly end-stopped:

Aegeon. Proceed, Solinus, to procure my fall,
And by the doom of death end woes and all.
Duke. Merchant of Syracusa, plead no more.
I am not partial to infringe our laws;
The enmity and discord which of late
Sprung from the rancorous outrage of your duke
To merchants, our well-dealing countrymen,

through constant uses of rhyme, to such doggerel, mingled of six-foot and seven-foot rhyming lines, as:

Dromio of Ephesus. Say what you will, sir, but I know what I know;
That you did beat me at the mart, I have your hand to show.
If the skin were parchment and the blows you gave were ink,
Your own handwriting would tell you what I think.

There are pages of this. In scene ii of Act III, we have a speech of Luciana's in seven quatrains rhymed a, b, a, b; and a reply from Antipholus of Syracuse in six quatrains similarly rhymed; and thereafter a colloquy in rhymed couplets. *Love's Labour's Lost* has constant rhymed couplets, a perfect sonnet interpolated into a speech of Biron's, alternate-rhymed quatrains, more sonnets, and so on. So did other plays of Shakespeare's earliest period. And then, insensibly, play by play altered in its technique, until at the hour of the greatest tragedies we had a balance between the end-stopped lines and the run-on lines, and rhyme relegated to a rare tag to end an act, and to songs and incantations. Thus Enobarbus, who knew her every mood, pictures the great queen:

Maecenas. Now Antony must leave her utterly.
Enobarbus. Never; he will not.
Age cannot wither her, nor custom stale
Her infinite variety; other women cloy
The appetites they feed, but she makes hungry
Where most she satisfies; for vilest things
Become themselves in her, that the holy priests
Bless her when she is riggish.

Here only the first two lines are end-stopped; the rest are all carry-on lines. In *The Winter's Tale,* and others of Shakespeare's final hour, we have a technique still more liberal:

For I cannot be
Mine own, nor any thing to any, if
I be not thine. To this I am most constant,
Though destiny says no. Be merry, gentle;
Strangle such thoughts as these with any thing
That you behold the while. Your guests are coming;
Lift up your countenance, as it were the day
Of celebration of that nuptial which
We two have sworn shall come.

Here we have not only a majority of carry-on lines, but a use of naturally unaccented terminals such as *if* and *which.* Elsewhere in the play words like *and* and *but* are the final words. In other words, the strict iambic pattern of five feet of ten syllables to the lines has become a loosely fluidic thing to control the main drift of his utterance; but its detail surges naturally in constant countertunes. From formal rhymed poems and sonnets, through plays highly rhymed at times and featuring a vast majority

of end-stopped lines, to the natural utterance at the last—this is the story of this supreme master's technical progress.

Now here is a sonnet opening, no doubt far less familiar, by another poet—a sonnet *On Woman:*

> Ah! who can e'er forget so fair a being?
> Who can forget her half-retiring sweets?
> God! She is like a milk-white lamb that bleats
> For man's protection. Surely the All-Seeing,
> Who joys to see us with his gifts agreeing,
> Will never give him pinions, who intreats
> Such innocence to ruin,—who vilely cheats
> A dove-like bosom.

The same poet, in another sonnet *On Woman,* has written:

> But when I mark
> Such charms with mild intelligences shine,
> My ear is open like a greedy shark,
> To catch the tunings of a voice divine.

It would be difficult, from this picture of woman bleating like a lamb, and of ears opened greedy-shark-like, to predict much of a future for such a versifier. And yet this particular poet later, and not much later, achieved the *Ode to a Grecian Urn,* the magical *The Eve of Saint Mark,* the magnificent torso *Hyperion:* for it is John Keats who began so earthily as the lines above indicate. Keats is great in the rhymed stanza patterns, as his odes attest; but he is greatest, not in the rhymed *Endymion,* but in the far higher flight of the unrhymed *Hyperion,* with lines like:

> Be thou therefore in the van
> Of circumstance; yea, seize the arrow's barb
> Before the tense string murmur. . . .
>
> Knowledge enormous makes a God of me.

His progress was from rhyme, at the brief end, to an absence of rhyme: to discarding the fetters grown of similar sound-endings, and substituting in their stead the magnificent naturalness of the high-pitched last vast product. Milton, as deft a rhymester as the Stuart days produced —witness *L'Allegro, Il Penseroso,* the higher flight of *Lycidas*—when he came to write what he held was his life-work, *Paradise Lost,* and the two later large works, discarded rhyme and formal stanza for the freer form of heroic blank verse.

For growth is the law of life: growth out of rigid patterns, into an ever-expanding fluidity of movement. The young oak tree must break first its constricting acorn-shell; it must break upward, sun-drawn and sun-seeking, through earth to air; it must strive ever upward and in all sideways directions, until its utmost reach has been attained; and it must grow downward compensatingly, into the neighborly secret places of the earth. The young child must break the rigidity of the home-pattern by widening associations of school life, of extra-family friendships, of association with clerical or secular organizations, of identification of self as a corpuscle in the body social of city or village, state, country, and, finally, of the still amorphous republic of men; growing through parent-taught and teacher-taught patterns of thought into his own thinking

and his own wording of thoughts and desires that bud, early and late, within the rich soil of his own nature. The price for surrendering growth is not dissimilar to death: the rooted tree, the rooted person, the too-rooted artist, yields to a stolidity instead of a flight.

Growth is the law of every art and every craft. The very tools of poetry have grown, in size, adaptability, and number, during your own lifetime. Bind yourself forever to a fixed range of themes, a fixed range of forms, and your utterance is inevitably choked into the narrow compass of these themes and forms: it is if the north wind demeaned itself to speak only through a penny whistle.

The forms can be learned early, with advantage; but, since these are best learned from scrutinizing the achievements in poetry of those who have shone in it, with these forms are learned, from the first, a multiplicity of possible variations. Monotony is the deadliest sin, in life or in art; living life, living art, living poetry, constantly vary. Once you have mastered the potential strictness of the patterns, in your practice you will naturally begin to experiment with the variations of others, and then with your own variations; for you have absorbed these from the very poems which were pointed out as your high models in versification. Insofar as you have something of importance —even if it be of importance only to yourself—to say, you will, in the end, shrug away all impediments of every sort, and speak out in the end in your own idiom.

This may not mean eliminating rhyme, or metre, or any one or more of the fixed forms: it may mean using them

as your servitors, and not serving them as your overlord. There was an hour when the sonnet was utterly my master; and an hour, not later than the first group of *Eagle Sonnets,* when I had mastered its strictness, but held myself, with hardly a variation, to the formal pattern, to say my own word. And now I have mastered more than its strictness: I have mastered a few of its potential variations, some of them not chronicled before, and, to my own pleasure at least, I use it without strain for strange and—again, to me, at least—pleasing strains. There comes an hour when any artist must strain the pattern until it can no longer fairly be called by its original name. Thus Shelley in the cater-sonnet *Ozymandias;* and thus came the quoted variant of the sonnet, *Night Entrance,* which grew in the unconscious out of the sonnet form, but cannot in fairness be called a sonnet. The ballade pattern became one with my technical equipment; and, when the word enclosed in *The Dodo and the Gingko Tree* came to be spoken, I wrote, not a ballade, but verses—which you may adjudge, or not, to constitute poetry—based faintly upon the ballade form, but not at all concerned with the properly required strictness of that form. This I cannot hold to be a vice: only, I do not call the result a ballade. Here it is:

Sprung of the men who found this land,
Sprung of their sons who tilled it,
Sprung of their sons, whose rigid hand
Reined it, whose hot loins filled it
With sinister and dexter kin,
We stand, these lords' descendants,

Gaunt, gone to seed, misfitted in
An ailing superintendence.

Grace we have, of decaying kind,
Wit to greet any scourging,
A warped will and a hectic mind,
And a weak body's hot urging.
And the dodo went, and the gingko tree
Goes slowly, pampered and coddled;
And so, scions of the past, are we
With souls and bodies addled.

Sprung of the men who lorded it
Over a new world's wonder,
We dodder with our sunset wit,
And never a clap of thunder
To mark this lessens, this dims, this dies,
This echo of a splendid
Hour that crumbled with Eden's rose,
Its last long agony ended.

Prince, let me summon your spectre out.
Gall's no unmanly quaffing;
We faint erect beneath the knout,
Laughing, still laughing.

From a critical standpoint, it seems to me impossible that the last line could have been adopted as a refrain for a ballade based upon this. The rhymes came naturally: the writer was not conscious, even, that he was skimming close to the ballade form throughout, although that clearly dominated the unconscious that did the shaping. No, not a ballade, but verses written after the form had been

mastered and relegated to the hinterland of achieved technique. And, in the end, poetry is more important than any form.

Things to Avoid.—In vocabulary, the language should be living. Any word, in common usage or enmummied in the past, may be used in its proper place; but, where the poet speaks in his own person, as a rule the language will be the poet's living language. Unless you live a life dominated by Greek deities and move under a constant cloud of classical allusions, these may with profit be excised from your work. Do not compare the subway to Phaeton's chariot; it is more like a rat-run than like the cloud-paved course of the sun. There is small compliment in likening Napoleon or Pershing to Mars: for Mars could not have lasted a minute before the rattle of musketry or a barrage of modern guns. And avoid, like a plague, those hackneyed phrases, those rubber-stamp poeticisms, called clichés. "The boundless blue;" "the dewy earth;" teeth like pearls; eyes like stars, or violets, or pools; cheeks like roses, or peach-sides sun-encarmined; a throat like a swan—suspect these: there is more freshness, and perhaps equally as much poetry, in likening teeth to chiclets, or eyes to auto lamps, or cheeks to boiled lobsters, or a throat to an alban smoke-stack or a giraffe's own throat. Modern slang and colloquialisms are less of a quagmire; but here the danger is that, in a near tomorrow, and all days that follow it, your words will be as unintelligible as Etruscan inscriptions to a traffic policeman.

As to themes, little may be said, beyond the warning

that, if you choose an overworked theme, you run the danger of writing platitudes; and, if you choose one too rigorously censored, you limit your audience, decrease your popularity, and may, in the end, become a bookleggers' item, smuggled from hand to eager hand.

As to treatment, if sincerity animates your work, you will, it is to be trusted, escape banality. If banality is your outlook, by all means say it: but, only to the Babbitt-minded, then, will you shine as a poet. There is no gain, either, in using that popular modern treatment which shams insanity. Modern sane people must either conclude that Gertrude Stein, the T. S. Eliot of *The Waste Land,* the James Joyce of *Ulysses,* are, in part at least, abnormal to the point of insanity; or that they sham this, as a short-cut to speedy recognition.

Plagiarism, or adopting the idioms and phrases of other poets, is of course to be avoided. At times lines come to you which you hail as original, and which become embedded in your own work; these may be lines once encountered in some other poet's work, which come up unfathered in the unconscious process of poem creation. As soon as you or any one identifies the lines as borrowed, purge the poem of them. I recall one versifier, whose volume I had to review, who had bodily lifted the refrain "Spirit of Night" from Shelley, who had his "forest primeval" made common knowledge by Longfellow, whose love was "like a red, red rose," and who altogether had concocted a jambalaya of echoes, instead of speaking his own word. This versifier's case was hopeless. Imitation of

another poet, or poets, at the beginning of one's writing, is almost inevitable. There is no hurt in concealing the echoey verses from the light of other's eyes, and withholding publication until your speech is your own.

On Translating Poetry.—Translating poetry is as impossible as altering a Chinese tune into Occidental music, or adapting *Annie Laurie* to Chinese orchestration. The very scales of music differ; the intervals are different; and the tune of one land cannot reappear in the idiom of the other land, and still be the same tune. Poetry, at its height, calls for a technical utilization of the poetic devices of its particular land of origin. Each word used has its own overtones, its own usages and welded associations, which can not be carried over into another language. The poet uses, at his best, a magical word-music; be selects, to convey his emotion, words whose tug at the heart-strings can be felt, but not measured or rendered in any equivalent form. Take these two magical lines from Keats:

> Magic casements, opening on the foam
> Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn.

Even if you translated this, word for word, into a language which had words of identical meanings, the word-music would differ completely, the associations would differ, and the resultant could not be the poetry of Keats in another language. This can not even be translated into English. Accurately paraphrased, it gives:

> Supernatural windows, unclosing on the bubbles
> Of dangerous oceans, in enchanted countries dejected.

All the poetry is gone forever. We may be able to sense, by mastering Villon's French, the magic in the line:

Mais ou sont les neiges d'antan?

But no translation of this, into English verse, can recapture the music of the original. It has been tried repeatedly, as in these versions:

But what is become of last year's snow? . . .
But where, ah where be last year's snows? . . .
But where are the snows of yester-year?

"Is become" is a poeticism, "where be" a worse one, "yester-year" another: for, while we say "yesterday," we do not say, in living language, "yester-year." Do your best with it:

But where are yesterday's snows?

Yet more than "yesterday" is meant.

But where are the snows of years gone by?
But where are the snows of the years that are dead?
But where are the snows that are past?

Each of these lines may, or may not, be poetic: but each is a different utterance from Villon's. "But where are the—" so far, we are on safe ground. But he has only eight syllables to his line pattern; the vowel music differs, the consonantal music differs, the overtones differ.

Take the evocative element of words. When Alfred

Noyes uses, as the climax line in his resounding chant *Marchaunt Adventures,*

Englande!—Englande!—Englande!—Englande!

this mounts, to those who feel with him the long peaks of glory of England's past (forgetting for the moment the valleys, deep as the peaks are high, of disgrace and obloquy) to a magnificent emotional climax. Differently used, say as a refrain in Shelley's vituperative *Masque of Anarchy,* the same line might have evoked utter detestation. A translation of this, where the mere name of a foreign land is repeated four times, by a poet, and to hearers, who can not throb to the remembered triumphs, is meaningless and drably prosy. Thus we would hardly thrill to "Finland! Finland! Finland! Finland!" as poetry; and, if the whole word music goes, as in "*Angleterre! Angleterre! Angleterre! Angleterre!*" the whole thing is lost.

The only rendition of poetry in another tongue that is adequate is re-creation, not translation. When Fitzgerald made the quatrains of Omar Khayyam a poetical possession of the English race, he did this by subduing his mettle entirely within the attitudes and music of his original, and then bringing up from his own subconscious deeps a new poem, saying much the same thing, but saying it as the word of an English poet to English hearts in the English way. He was a re-creator, not a translator. Here are literal translations of the materials from which Fitzgerald drew four of his quatrains:

I desire a flask of ruby wine and a book of verses,
Just enough to keep me alive—and half a loaf is needful;
And then, that thou and I should sit in the wilderness
Is better than the Kingdom of a Sultan.

Everywhere that there has been a rose or tulip bed,
It has come from the redness of the blood of a king;
Every violet shoot that grows from the earth
Is a mole that was once on the cheek of a beauty.

I have travelled far in a-wandering by valley and desert,
It came to pass that I wandered in all quarters of the world;
I have not heard from anyone who came from that road,
The road he travelled, no traveller travels again.

Hell is a spark from my useless worries,
Paradise is a moment of time when I am tranquil.

It is probable that no amount of such verse could have stirred the English soul. It lacks all musical appeal of word-usage, and is not yet akin to our way of looking at things, and of saying things. Confronted with this material, Fitzgerald wrought the miracle, and we have:

A Book of Verses underneath the Bough,
A Jug of Wine, a Loaf of Bread—and Thou
  Beside me singing in the Wilderness—
Oh, Wilderness were Paradise enow.

I sometimes think that never blows so red
The Rose, as where some buried Caesar bled;
  That every hyacinth the garden wears
Dropt in her Lap from some once lovely head.

Strange, is it not? that of the myriads who
Before us pass'd the door of Darkness through,
Not one returns to tell us of the Road,
Which to discover, we must travel, too.

Heav'n, but the Vision of fulfilled Desire,
And Hell the Shadow from a Soul on fire,
Cast on the Darkness into which Ourselves
So late emerged from, shall so soon expire.

The re-creation has been accomplished, and the poem is Fitzgerald's, and ours, and no more a translation.

Here is an accurate translation of the first five verses of chapter one of Genesis, the rendition being by Dr. Charles Prosper Fagnani, of Union Theological Seminary:

At the beginning of Elohim's forming the heavens and the earth, when darkness was upon the face of the abyss, Elohim said, "Let there be light," and there was light.

Elohim saw that the light was excellent.

And Elohim separated the light from the darkness and he called the light Day and the darkness he called Night.

Evening came, and Morning came,
One Day.

The masters of word-music who gave us that well-spring of English prose and poetry embodied in the King James Bible made of this:

In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.

And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.

And god said, Let there be light: and there was light.

And God saw the light, that it was good; and God divided the light from the darkness.

And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And the evening and the morning were the first day.

Modern scholarship says that Fagnani's translation is accurate; but the accustomed version is more: it is poetry. The most perfect translation of a poem is no more, in the new language, than rude notes for a poem to be built upon. There is always need for accurate renditions of the poetry of other lands; but, unless the English versifier re-issue the product as his own re-creation, it remains mere verse, a museum curiosity rather than impassioned song.

The Technique of Verse Criticism.—One of the by-products of many years' criticism of the poetry of others is my Bluebeard's closet of dreadful examples. I regard these metrical atrocities with a peculiar affection; some of them are so bad that they are magnificent. There is, for instance, that incredibly long didactic effusion, entitled: "Not in Aviation Lies Man's Salvation." There are countless rhymes in the Village Milton class, such as the reformist carol commencing,

The pigs are in the peaches,
  Devouring them with noisy glee
To my heart it a lesson teaches
  That things like this should be.

The pigs are in the peaches,
  While the hungry hordes from New York town
For the fruit in vain beseeches,
  And the face of justice is clouded with a frown.

And there is the retelling of the *General Slocum* disaster by a daughter of one of the affected families, whose climax lines are:

> A dreadful loss! Our family group was modified by two,
> Two little ones, a boy and girl, whom hardly then I knew.

These are preserved to amuse; but, as critic, my dominant feeling could never be wholly compound of amusement. For these inept laborers had the same poetic urge that I had; often the same themes, and the same intentions of treatment; it is only in their utter ignorance of technique that they usher themselves into this Bluebeard's closet.

Sonnets? It was Arthur Guiterman, I believe, who once divided sonnets into two types, the "Like as"-es and the "What time"-s. It is almost unbelievable how many sonnets are still written with these atrocious beginnings—poetic, perhaps, in the hands of their first user, but crimes today. Never a month goes by, with the Poetry Society of America, but that a number of sonnets with one or the other opening phrase makes its appearance. This morning's mail brings me one for correction, its first eight lines introduced by "Like as a sea-gull, flung away from sea," its sestet commencing, "So my pale soul, pent in these city walls." It takes infinite patience to lift such flawed singing into something notable. And yet, I think, it may be worth while; for I have not forgotten exactly where my own verse began.

Perhaps it would be of value to give an actual poem,

as offered for criticism by its author, and give the critical suggestions made. And yet, even with permission granted, there is an abiding feeling of a violation of the proprieties. Let us, instead, take a familiar and widely appreciated poem from a contemporary, and see if its excellence of technique is uniform. William Ellery Leonard's *Two Lives* was applauded by critics from coast to coast. Van Wyck Brooks, a shrewd commentator, calls it "beautiful from the first line to the last"; Joel Elias Spingarn, equally as distinguished in the field of criticism, hailed its passion and power; its appreciators were legion. And this is not surprising, when we encounter sonnet-stanzas as well wrought as:

> Mid-morning of mid-June: Her sudden whim
> Among the guests (who chatted ill at ease):
> "O let's be married out beneath the trees—
> This mantel with its garlands is so prim."
> As if she said, "Let's row an hour or swim,"
> As if she said, "Let's pick the white sweet pease,
> And leave the pink and purple for the bees";
> As if she said, "Let's get the shears and trim
> The lilac stems." . . . Blue lake and bluer sky
> Merged with the green of earth, of odorous earth,
> A scarlet tanager went flashing by,
> The unseen thrasher sang with all his mirth. . . .
> The old dame neighbor said with happy tears,
> "The sweetest wedding of my eighty years."

Now there is not a word-usage here which is not living, well-chosen, and beyond criticism. If the whole poem had

been so written, or if this had been the dominant technique, then all the high words said of it could be deservedly underwritten by any thoughtful critic. But this is not the dominant word-usage. When we reach a line like,

> For that she died not ere she won her quest,

we realize that poeticisms have supplanted the living vocabulary; and that, spoken in the actual speech, this would have to be glossed, "Because she did not die before she won what she sought." "For that," "she died not," "ere" and "quest" are all out of the current of living speech. They are not actually uttered, to convey thoughts, even in the most literate and cultured circles. Isolated lines like:

> *Ye* that do hear my story, *wroth* with me. . . .
>
> Hands *'gainst* my temples *as to* crunch the brain. . . .
>
> When I *bethink me 'tis* a husband's pen. . . .
>
> *Ye*
> Who *reft* your sister thus, in *reaving* me.

The dead pronoun *ye,* the archaic *reft* and *reaving,* the contraction *'gainst,* the use of the ellipsized *as to* for *as if to,* the triple faultiness of *bethink me 'tis*—this is not a living speech. Even a line as colloquial in meaning as

> I sat *in sweater* with the college boys

is artificial; how much better (if the sweater is to be men-

tioned at all) to combine living word usage with a more living speech rhythm, into some such product as:

I sat, sweatered, among the college boys.

It is for the sake of this poet himself, and of all living poets and the poets in English still to be, that I point out this apparent weakness. The point of view here taken is not a statement of dogmatic truth. If he prefers, Mr. Leonard can continue to write in just the idiom deprecated above; if it is his actual speech and thought idiom, he is most sincere in using it. Nor is the attitude appearing throughout this study any personal matter with me, growing out of my own theorizings. It is, instead, the concentrated voice of the best poetic usage of this age and the past ages. What I say of *Two Lives* stems directly out of what Shakespeare did increasingly as he matured in his craft; what Shelley, Keats, and the rest did at their peak moments; what Robinson and Frost innately and invariably do, what Miss Millay, Miss Wylie, and the whole stream of living lyricists, American and English, invariably do. It is one of the prices that must be paid for contemporary appreciation from the best practitioners of poetry and the best critical minds: for Mr. Leonard, for all of his excellence in narration and his frequent loveliness of music, is not ranked beside Robinson, Frost, Miss Millay, and Miss Wylie; and it is at least tenable that one of the causes may lie in his predilection for poeticisms—in his over-readiness to avail himself of what has been called poetic license, and which, if over-used, may just as well be termed poetic

suicide, the poet's self-destruction of the poetic worth of his lines. Moreover, this is one of the prices that must be paid for permanence, if we are to learn from what has been garnered out of the poetic past. Only a living vocabulary can be used to phrase living poetry. Go on your knees to Shakespeare at his height, and read such speech as:

> I have lived long enough: my way of life
> Is fallen into the sear, the yellow leaf,
> And that which should accompany old age,
> As honour, love, obedience, troops of friends,
> I must not look to have; but, in their stead,
> Curses, not loud but deep, mouth-honour, breath,
> Which the poor heart would fain deny, and dare not.

You may, with reason, note the substitution of "the sear, the yellow leaf" for "the sear and yellow leaf": it is, at worst, only the substitution of one possible speech arrangement of the words for another. "This is the great, the distinguished Napoleon" is, after all, quite as living an utterance as "This is the great and distinguished Napoleon." "In their stead" is a slightly artificial variant of "instead of them"; "fain" was alive then, and is dead now. But how free, on the whole, this verse is from any strain! No *ye's* and *thee's,* no *'tis, 'gainst, 'twas, bethink me, mine eyes,* and all the archaic rest of it: and this was written three and a quarter centuries ago. No, the teachment is sound: poetry must speak a living speech, if it is to live.

So you, qualified in the end to be your own critic, will go over your work, and shape it toward a living utterance of your own unique and individual vision. Test the rhythm

for a faithfulness to your rhythm pattern; and then test your variations, to be sure that you have avoided monotony. Lop away all artificialities of utterance. Test the rhyme for accuracy, meanwhile, if you feel its merit, tending toward assonance and consonance as a pleasing variation. Test your theme for its freshness, at least of outlook; cut away echoes from others; and, if you have done all this faithfully, you should have what, in your own eyes at least, is a poem. And may the gods whom you serve grant you open ears and kindred kindled hearts, to your own heart's content, when you offer your verses to the ears and hearts of other men.

The Sale and Publication of Verse and Poetry.—Serious verse, which, in your case, let us hope, is also serious poetry, has small periodical market. A few magazines use poems as poems, and not as fillers-in; the more usual custom is to run a poem at the end of a story or article, so as to utilize the otherwise blank space. From this custom has grown up a magazine editorial dictum that poems must be short, about twenty lines being the average desired extent to which the verses should go. You must try out your verses on the various editors yourself; and many a beginner has secured the entrance to some highly aloof market, which far more experienced poets can not attain. Yet, in the end, paying markets are few; and it is wiser not to expect any noteworthy addition to your income from the sale of serious verse. Use it for the cake of life, perhaps, earning elsewhere your bread and butter. Yet there is every reason to persevere in your attempt; for the cost

of postage is not great, and there is an inner glow from seeing the inhospitable ramparts of one of the better markets crumbling at your assaults.

Newspapers, as a rule, do not pay for verse; and there are many magazines, especially poetry magazines, which print but do not pay for poetry. My advice is to be represented as widely in these as possible. When you see your own stuff in print, you gain an added aloofness in your critical attitude toward the product, and can the better perfect it, if it needs further working, for its ultimate appearance in volume form. Moreover, there is every reason to hope for representation in the annual anthologies of magazine verse edited so well and so long by William Stanley Braithwaite. Many of the poetry magazines give annually a long schedule of prizes; and there is every reason to seek these, and to thank your stars for such guerdons as come your way.

Lastly, there is the matter of volume publication. This, in some exceptional case, as Robinson's *Tristram* and Stephen Vincent Benet's *John Brown's Body,* both chosen by one of the book-of-the-month clubs, may be financially profitable; ordinarily, the financial reward is slight. But the inner glow comes more enduringly from a volume publication than from any other method af appearance. You will, if you are wise, reap gain from appreciators and detractors alike. If you agree with the indictment of your faults, you will have ample chance now to correct them, for some future appearance of this or subsequent volumes. If you do not, you will at least have let the critics

say their word, and you can toss them another morsel on which to use their teeth, luckily often blunted. In seeking volume publication, it is best to begin with the standard publishers, who publish an occasional volume of poetry as a grace-note to their prosy seasonal lists of books, and who assume the financial responsibility for the book's publication. If you cannot succeed here, there are always honest pay-as-you-enter publishers, who will give your poems a volume chance, when you pay all or some of the cost of publication and advertising. It is far better to have your poems appear under such auspices, than to have them not appear at all.

The field of light verse is somewhat more profitable. There are magazines that specialize in buying excellent light verse; there are many more that constantly use such; and even the staid *Saturday Evening Post* has its enjoyable *Short Turns and Encores.* Be methodical in your book-keeping records of the goings and comings of your versified children, so that you will not suffer from the embarrassment of selling the same poem too often, or the far deeper financial embarrassment of seeing a poem in one of the non-paying magazines, and afterwards realizing that it has been sold to a paying periodical.

Do not be discouraged at rejection slips. Of course, you will be; my meaning is, overcome your discouragement, and keep at it. You always have the consolation of being sure that your judgment is far better than the editor's: are not editors disappointed writers, as a rule? For the price that must be paid for ultimate success is, in general,

a long apprenticeship with such miseries as editorial regrets, too often accompanied by postage due demands on your returned sheaf of verses. But the return for this is an inner glow and an outward accolade that will outlast the marble-fronted and powerful skyscrapered monuments to trade, whose life, in these changing years, is as brief as the true poet's acclaim is long.

INDEX

Accent, as unit of rhythm, 43–45
Accent pattern, 79
Acrostics, 343
Adams, Franklin Pierce, 328, 342
Address to Young Ladies, 225
Adenez-le-Roi, 257
Adonais, 190
Adonic, 137
Aeneid, 167
Aeschylus, 184
Alba, The, 232
Alcaics, 136
Alcohol, 224
Aldrich, Thomas Bailey, 320
Alexandrine, 126
Alice in Wonderland, 221, 306
Alison Gross, 78
Alliteration, 113
Among the Redskins, 320
Amphibrach, The, 71
Amphimacer, The, 71
Anacreontic, 196
Analyzed rhyme, 114
Anapest, The, 52
Anapestic verse, 67–69
Annales, 167
Anonymous, 196, 280
Antillean, 81
Arbre fourchu, 275
Archaic verse, 340
Ariosto, 168
Aristophanes, 230
Arsis, 41
Assonance, 111
Autumn Sonnet, 36
Bab Ballads, 310
Bacchius, The, 136
Ballad, The, 169
Ballad meter, 175
Ballad of Mary, A, 63
Ballad of the White Horse, The, 182, 192
Ballade, The, 236
Ballade of Dead Actors, 237
Ballade of Primitive Man, 240
Ballade of Prose and Rhyme, The, 248
Ballade of Swimming, 250
Ballade of the Pompadour's Fan, 242
Ballade of Truisms, 250
Ballade with double refrain, 248
Ballads, ancient, 56, 78, 169
Barbara Allen, 78
Barham, Richard Harris, 109
Barrack Room Ballads, 179
Bay Psalm Book, 223
Before the Dawn, 260
Behold the Deeds, 251
Benét, Stephen Vincent, 378
Benét, William Rose, 79, 339
Beowulf, 166
Betrayed, The, 201
Binnorie, 78, 175
Blake, William, 123
Blank verse, 90
Bradford, Gamaliel, 130
Braithwaite, William Stanley, 378
Breu-doble, The, 232
Bring With You, 204
Brooke, Rupert, 215

Browning, Elizabeth Barrett, 79
Browning, Robert, 72, 79, 108, 109, 180, 187, 192
Bunner, Henry Cuyler, 251, 258, 320
Burgess, Gelett, 324
Burns, Robert, 20, 127, 204, 230
Butler, Samuel, 290
Byrom, John, 255
Byron, Lord (George Gordon Byron) 68, 130, 180, 182, 230

Cadenced verse, 94
Calverley, Charles Stuart, 302
Camoens, 168
Campbell, Jas. Edwin, 323
Campion, Thomas, 138, 145, 168 195
Canopus stanza, 129
Canzo, The, 232
Carman, Bliss, 324
Carroll, Lewis, 306
Carryl, Charles E., 326
Carryl, Guy Wetmore, 326
Cavalier Tunes, 72
Century of Roundels, A, 263
Chain of Sonnets, 254
Chain Verses, 254
Changed, 304
Chant royal, 251
Charge of the Light Brigade, The, 69
Chaucer, Geoffrey, 129, 234
Chevy Chase, 56
Chesterton, Gilbert Keith, 84, 192, 316
Chinese Nightingale, 29
Choriamb, The, 72, 137
Choriambic line, 137
Christabel, 79, 180
Christman, W. W., 116
Christmas Night in the Quarters, 322
Cinquains, 125, 219
Classic Forms, 135
Cleomades, 257
Clough, A. H., 316
Coleman, Charles W., 272
Coleridge, Samuel Taylor, 5, 44, 79, 134, 177, 180, 230, 292, 349
Combinations of metres, 78
Comedy, 184
Comedy of Errors, The, 356
Commendable Castigation of Old Mother Hubbard, The, 327
Common metre, 124
Composite verse, 340
Congo, The, 85
Conkling, Grace Hazard, 55
Conqueror Worm, The, 133
Consonance, 114
Conventions in poetry, 100
Cotter, Joseph Seaman, 323
Couplet, The, 118
Cowper, William, 138
Craftsmanship in the Masters, 347
Crane, Stephen, 94
Crapsey, Adelaide, 119, 125, 219
Criticism of verse, 156, 371
Cummings, E. E., 100

Dactyl, The, 69
Dactylic hexameter, 135
Dactylic verse, 69
Daisy Fraser, 188
Daly, T. A., 262
Daniel, Arnaut, 269
Dante, 222
Davies, Mary Carolyn, 63
Davies, W. H., 126
Davy and the Goblin, 326
Day of Doom, The, 223
de Born, Bertran, 234
de la Mare, Walter, 80
de Pegulhan, Aimeric, 233
De Rerum Naturae, 222
Deschamps, Eustache, 234
Destruction of Sennacherib, The, 68

de Ventadorn, Bernart, 233
Dialect verse, 335
Dialect verse, Negro, 322
Dickinson, Emily, 117, 198
Didactic verse, 221
Dimeter, The, 88
Dobson, Austin, 241, 248, 277
Dodgson, Charles Lutwidge, 306
Dodo and the Gingko Tree, The, 362
Don Juan, 130
d'Orleans, Charles, 232, 234
Double ballade, 249
Double Ballade of Life and Fate, 249
Double Ballade of the Nothingness of Things, 250
Double rhyme, 102
Doubt No More That Oberon, 200
Dramatic lyric, 186
Dramatic monolog, 186
Dramatic poetry, 183
Dryden, John, 230
Dubois, Alan, 266
Dunbar, Paul Laurence, 323

Edward, Edward, 172
Eidolons, 124
Elder Edda, 166
Elegiac verse, 134
Elegy, The 190
Elegy in a City Backyard, 324
Elegy on the Death of a Mad Dog, 293
Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard, 51
Eliot, George, 112
Elmore, James Byron, 224
End rhyme, 102
En Route, 256
Envoy, The, 236
Epic, The, 165
Epitaph in Form of a Ballade, 247
Epitrite, The, 136
Escape, 200
Essay on Man, An, 119
Established, 201
Eve of St. Agnes, The, 130, 180
Evolution, 151
Explanation, An, 323

Fables for the Frivolous, 326
Fagnani, Charles Prosper, 370
Fairy Queen, The, 168
Faithless Nelly Gray, 293
Fame, 215
Feminine ending, 54
Feminine rhyme, 102
Fickle, Arthur Davison, 217
Field, Eugene, 324
Fitzgerald, Edward, 123, 368
Five-line stanzas, 125
Fixed forms, The, 231
Forget, 216
Free verse, 92
Friend in Need, A, 342
Froissart, Jean, 234
Frost, Robert, 77, 147

Galliambic line, 139
Gilbert, William Schenck, 87, 274, 309
Gilman, Charlotte Perkins, 231, 261, 270, 324
Glory Road, De, 86
Glose, The, 266
Goddard, Gloria, 206
God's Trombones, 336
Goldsmith, Oliver, 293
Googe, Barnaby, 255
Gower, John, 234
Graham, Harry, 284
Graves, Robert, 100
Gray, Thomas, 51, 150, 189
Greatness, Poetic, 19
Greek drama, 184
Greek epic poets, 165
Greek odes, 189

Grimm Tales Made Gay, 326
Guiterman, Arthur, 325, 372

Halleck, Fitz-Greene, 191
Hamlet, 43, 49, 100
Harmonious Heedlessness of Little Boy Blue, The, 327
Harte, Bret, 324
Haunted Palace, The, 133
Hay, John, 324
Heine, Heinrich, 176
Hendecasyllabics, 136
Henley, William Ernest, 237, 249, 259, 274
Heptameter, 88
Herford, Oliver, 324
Heroic blank verse, 56, 91
Heroic couplets, 118
Herrick, Robert, 196
Hertha, 67
Hexameter, 88
Hiawatha, 60
Hoffenstein, Samuel, 330
Hokku, The, 220
Holloway, John Wesley, 323
Homer, 166
Homes, 270
Home, Sweet Home, 320
Hood, Thomas, 80, 293
Horace, 230
House on the Hill, The, 231, 274
Housman, A. E., 176, 192
Hovey, Richard, 324
Hudibras, 290
Humorous verse, 334
Hunting of the Snark, The, 308
Hunt, Leigh, 102
Hyperion, 76, 353, 359

Iamb, The, 52
Iambic verse, 52
Ictus, 41
Identity in rhyming, 104
Idylls of the King, The, 180
"If I Should Die," 215
If the Seas Dry, 205
Il Pendsroso, 191
Incorrect rhymes, 104
Indentation, 139
Indentation of the sonnet, 140
In Flanders Fields, 231
In Memoriam, 123, 190
Insanity in poetry, 364
Inspiration, 23
Intellect as critic, 24
Internal rhyme, 103
Iolanthe, 312, 313–315

Jabberwocky, 307
James I of Scotland, 129
Jenny Kissed Me, 102
Jerusalem Delivered, 168
John Brown's Body, 378
Johns, Orrick, 86
Johnson, Burges, 323
Johnson, James Weldon, 323, 336
Jones, Charles C., 342
Jonson, Ben, 189, 196
July, 277
Juvenal, 230

Kalevala, 166
Keats, John, 12, 27, 76, 130, 131, 142, 150, 180, 215, 230, 353, 359, 366
Khayyám, Omar, 369
King James Bible, 92, 370
Kinges Quhair, The, 129
Kipling, Rudyard, 127, 151, 179, 280
Kubla Khan, 44
Kyrielle, The, 255

Lady of Shalott, The, 127
Lai, The, 274
L'Allegro, 191
Lamb, Charles, 120

Lang, Andrew, 209
Langland, William, 94
Lanier, Sidney, 21, 103, 179, 198
Lardner, Ring W., 58
Lass of Lochroyan, The, 174
Last Duchess, My, 187
Last Leaf, The, 127
Lays of Ancient Rome, 179
Lear, Edward, 278, 300
Leaves of Grass, 355
Leonard, William Ellery, 373
Lepanto, 84
Light verse in English, 287
Limerick, The, 277
Lindsay, Vachel, 29, 84
Line length in verse, 98
Listeners, The, 80
Little Willies, 282
Locker-Lampson, Frederick, 289
Longfellow, Henry Wadsworth, 60
Love Among the Mistletoe, 224
Love's Labour's Lost, 356
Lowell, Amy, 200
Lowes, John Livingston, 150, 349
Lucretius, 222
Lusiads, 168
Lycidas, 190
Lyric, The, 188

Macaronic verse, 340
Macaulay, Thomas Babington, 89, 179
Macbeth, 60
Macrae, John, 231
Mahabharata, 166
Mainly About Me, 265
Man Must Live, A, 231, 261
Manlet, The, 309
Marchaunt Adventurers, 368
Margery, 126
Marquis, Don, 114, 332
Marsh Songs, 198
Marshes of Glynn, 198
Masculine ending, 54
Masculine rhyme, 101
Masefield, John, 180, 216
Masters, Edgar Lee, 187
Matthews, Brander, 256
Meeker, Marjorie, 116
Memorial to D. C., 190
Menken, Adah Isaacs, 93
Metre, 51
Metres, combination of, 78
Metrical romance, 180
Metrical stress, 41
Millay, Edna St. Vincent, 77, 115, 190, 200, 217
Miller's Daughter, The, 350
Milne, A. A., 318–320
Milton, John, 21, 90, 143, 168, 190, 191, 210, 360
Monkhouse, Cosmo, 260
Monometer, 88
Moods of light verse, The, 334
Morton, David, 218
Mosaic verse, 340
Mother Goose, 278
Mother Goose, Rhythms of, 295
Mother Goose for Grown-ups, 326
"Music, When Soft Voices Die," 63

Narrative poetry, 165
Near rhymes, 114
Negro dialect verse, 322
Newspaper chain verse, 334
Nibelungenlied, 166
Night Entrance, 213, 362
Nonsense verse, 301, 307, 340
"Not All My Will," 217
Novels in verse, 180
Now We Are Six, 318
Noyes, Alfred, 368
Number of feet in a line, 87

O'Byrne, Mary Ann, 225
O Captain, My Captain, 191
Occasioual verse, 232

Octometer, The, 288
Ode, The, 188
Ode on the Intimations of Immortality, 189
Ode to the West Wind, 120, 131
Ode to Tobacco, 303
Off rhymes, 114
Old Familiar Faces, The, 120
On a Grecian Urn, 132
O'Neill, Eugene, 185
O'Neill, Rose, 18, 23, 146, 201
On His Blindness, 210
On Melancholy, 132
Onomatopoeia, 154
On Seeing Weather-beaten Trees, 119
On the Extinction of the Venetian Republic, 211
On Woman, 359
Opening rhyme, 200
Originality in poetry, 30
Orlando Furioso, 168
Ottava rima, 130
Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking, 93, 125, 354
Owl and the Pussy-cat, The, 301
Ozymandias, 212, 362

Paeon, The, 72
Pantoum, The, 256
Paradise Lost, 168
Parker, Dorothy, 329
Parody, 396
Passerat, Jean, 234
Pastoral, The, 190
Pastorella, The, 232
Patience, 313
Payne, John, 255, 276
Peck, Samuel Minturn, 260
Pelicans Fishing, 89
Pentameter, 88
Phonetic syzygy, 154
Piers Plowman, 113
Pike County Ballads, 324
Pinafore, 312
Pindaric odes, 189
Plagiarism in poetry, 365
Plain Fare, 203
Poe, Edgar Allan, 21, 116, 133, 135
Poem criticized, a, 156
Poem of the Cid, 166
Poet and His Book, The, 115
Poet, The, 13
Poetic greatness, 19
Poetic license, 110, 118
Poetry, defined, 1; and prose, 9; in human affairs, 9, 14; genesis of, 22, 28; and inspiration, 24; originality in, 30; and themes, 35
Polymetric verse, 94
Polyrhythmic poetry, 92
Polyrhythmic verse, stanza in, 135
Pope, Alexander, 56, 119, 130, 230, 255
Poulter's measure, 124
Precious Stones, 306
Problem of Human Life, The, 223
Probyn, May, 264
Progress, 218
Provençal verse, 232
Publication of verse, 18, 377
Punning verse, 334
Pure Mathematician, A, 325
Pyrrhic, The, 72

Quatrain, The, 122
Quest of the Ribband, The, 325

Rags and Dreams, 266
Raleigh, Sir Walter, 55
Ramayana, 166
Raven, The, 113
Realm of light verse, The, 229
Refrain, The, in fixed forms, 236
Retroensa, The, 233
Revenge, The, 179
Revenge of Hamish, The, 179

Rhyme, 101; incorrect, 104; not identity, 106; as creator, 110; in French verse, 235; in light verse, 247
Rhymes to be avoided, 17
Rhyme royal, 129
Rhyming dictionaries, 101; home-made, 243
Rhythm, 41; as duration, 41; defined, 42–43; as accent, 42; of the Bible, 92; of *Mother Goose*, 295
Richardson, Warfield Creath, 340
Riley, James Whitcomb, 324
Rime of the Ancient Mariner, The, 177, 349
Ring and the Book, The, 187, 192
Rispetto, The, 277
Rittenhouse, Jessie B., 203
Robinson, Edwin Arlington, 16, 147, 182, 217, 231, 274
Robinson, Ted, 281
Rondel, The, 259
Rondelet, The, 264
Rondeau, The, 261
Rondeau redouble, The, 264
Roses and Dreams, 234
Roundel, The, 263
Roundel, The, 264
Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám, 123, 369
Russell, Irwin, 322
Ruthless Rhymes for Heartless Homes, 283

Sale of verse, 377
Sailing the Mississippi at Midnight, 355
Sandburg, Carl, 32, 96, 97, 119, 149
Sapphics, 95, 114, 137
Satirical verse, 334
Saturday Evening Post, The, 379
Scansion, 51
Scott, Sir Walter, 93, 180
Seaman, Owen, 316
Septenary, 175
Serena, The, 232
Sestet, 126
Sestina, The, 233, 269
Sextet, 126
Shakespeare, William, 35, 43, 44, 49, 56, 60, 74, 75, 99, 143, 150, 155, 185, 194, 230, 356, 376
Shakespeare's sonnets, 73, 214
Shaped whimsey, 340
Shaw, Bernard, 185
Shelley, Percy Bysshe, 63, 91, 120, 126, 131, 190, 212, 362
Sherman, Frank Dempster, 320
Short metre, 104
Shropshire Lad, 176
Sicilian octave, The, 277
Sidney, Sir Philip, 215
Signal Service, 342
Simon Slick's Mule, 322
Simple lyric, 165
"Since Beauty Holds No Lease," 217
Single rhyme, 101
Sir Patrick Spens, 175
Sirvente, The, 232
Six-line stanza, 126
Slave Trader's Chantey, The, 339
Smith, Langdon, 151
Snowbound, 191
Song, The, 165
Song Against Songs, A, 317
Song by Rogero, 316
Song of Education, 278, 316
Song of Myself, 94
Song of the Decanter, 341
Song of Roland, 166
Song of the Shirt, The, 80
Song to One, A, 262
Sonnet, The, 209, Petrarchian or Italian, 209; Shakespearean, 214
Sonnette, The, 220

Sonnets to Craig, 144
Sons of Mary and Martha, The, 152
Sophocles, 184
Sorrows of Werther, The, 292
Soul's Errand, The, 55
Spenser, Edmund, 168, 215
Spenserian stanza, 130
Spingarn, Joel Elias, 373
Spondee, The, 71
Spoon River Anthology, 187
Spring Sadness, 276
Standards, 119
Stanza, The, 118
Sterling, George, 144
Stevenson, Robert Louis, 316
Stork, Charles Wharton, 119
Streamer, Col. D., 8, 283
Subjects of poetry, 35
Suckling, Sir John, 287
Sunrise, 198
Sweet Uses of Obesity, 316
Swerig, Vivian, 203
Swinburne, Algernon Charles, 67, 113, 138, 231, 247, 250, 263, 272
Sycamore in Spring, A, 206
Symphony, The, 103

Tail-rhyme stanza, 127
Tam-o'-Shanter's Ride, 230
Tampico, 55
Tanka, The, 220
Tasso, Torquato, 168
Taylor, Bert Leston, 328
Tears, Idle Tears, 90, 125
Teasdale, Sara, 119, 203
Tennyson, Alfred Lord, 69, 91, 113, 120, 123, 125, 127, 135, 155, 179, 180, 190, 350
Tenso, The, 232
Tercet, The, 120
Terza rima, 121, 131
Tetrameter, 88
Texte, The, 266
Thackeray, William Makepeace, 292
Themes of poetry, 28, 35, 364
Theocritus, 273
There Will Come Soft Rains, 119
Thesis, 41
Thespis, 184
Things to avoid in versifying, 364
Thompson, Francis, 16
Thomson, James, 23, 79
Tiger, The, 123
"Tired with All These," 214
To a Blank Sheet of Paper, 260
To a Field Mouse, 127
To a Nightingale, 128
To a Skylark, 126
To Autumn, 132
"Tobacco is a filthy weed," 283
To Celia, 196
To Helen, 126
Tone-color, 153
To One in Paradise, 133
To the Terrestrial Globe, 311
To Youth, 206
Tragedy, 183
Translating poetry, 366
Travel, 200
Treatment, Methods of, in verse, 365
Triad, 125
Tribrach, 72
Trimeter, 88
Triolet, The, 257
Triplet, 120
Triple rhyme, 102
Trochaic verse, 60
Trochee, The, 52, 60
Tusser, Thomas, 222
Twa Brothers, The, 175
Two Lives, 373
Two Voices, The, 120
Typographical oddities in verse, 342

Untermeyer, Louis, 263, 332, 338
Us Potes, 329

Variations, Use of, 72
Vers de société, 288
Vers, The, 232
Verse criticism, 156, 371
Village Miltons, 18, 223
Villanelle, The, 273
Villon, François, 232, 234, 247, 367
Vinal, Harold, 218
Virgil, 167
Virelai, The, 274
Virelai nouveau, The, 276
Vocabulary of poetry, 12, 141, 364
Voiture, Vincent, 203, 234, 261
Voltaire, François Marie Arouet de, 168

Warning, The, 220
Washington, George, 343
Weaver, John V. A., 36, 206
Weeks, L. T., 211
Wells, Carolyn, 324, 337
Wheelock, John Hall, 200
When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloomed, 190
When We Were Very Young, 318
Whimsical verse, 124, 190, 320, 340, 355
Whitman, Walt, 21, 93, 94
Whittier, John Greenleaf, 127, 191
"Why So Pale and Wan," 288
Widdemer, Margaret, 86
Wigglesworth, Rev. Michael, 223
Wilde, Oscar, 273
Winter Laughter, 156
Winter's Tale, The, 75
Words, Choice of, 141
Wordsworth, William, 35, 151, 189, 209
Works and Days, 222
"World Is Too Much With Us, The," 209
Writing iambic verse, 56
Writing narrative verse, 182
Writing the lyric, 207
Writing trochaic verse, 65
Wylie, Elinor, 115, 200, 218

Yarn of the Nancy Bell, 310
Young Celtic Poets, The, 325